

# WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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## YOUNG WILD WEST'S GRUB STAKE; AND HOW IT MADE A FORTUNE.

*By AN OLD SCOUT.*



The united efforts of the four caused the big boulder to turn over. "Gold! Gold!" cried the prospector, as he knelt and peered into an aperture that had been disclosed. "At last, Young Wild West! At last!" Arietta waved her hat.





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## YOUNG WILD WEST'S GRUB STAKE

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### How It Made a Fortune

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE HOUNDED PROSPECTOR.

Crang! Crang!

Two sharp reports rang out in quick succession on the clear morning air.

Then a crashing in the brush on the hill above the camp of Young Wild West was heard.

The dashing boy hero was in the act of drinking his coffee from the tin cup he held in his hand when these sounds broke upon the camp.

"I reckon something is up, boys!" he exclaimed, leaping to his feet and grabbing the Winchester rifle that was leaning against a rock. "We will have to investigate."

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, his partners, were right after him, while the girls quickly withdrew to the cover of some rocks close to the tents.

Wing Wah, the cook, and his brother, Hop, got out of the way in a hurry, too, showing that it was nothing new to them to have the camp attacked.

But this was not the case on this bright early morning in midwinter on the high, wooded plateau that took in parts of the States of Colorado and Utah.

Almost before Young Wild West and his partners were half way up the hill the form of a man broke from the bushes and came running toward them.

That the man was being pursued was evident. Fear was depicted in his eyes and his bronzed face wore a color that was akin to whiteness.

His clothing was ragged and his hair and beard unkempt, and gripping the handle of a big bowie in a manner that betokened desperation, he came on down the hill.

He did not see our hero and his two companions until he was within a dozen feet of them, and then a gasp came from his lips, quickly followed by an exclamation of joy.

"What's the trouble, stranger?" Young Wild West asked, as he came to a halt and looked over his shoulder apprehensively.

"Two sneakin' scoundrels was tryin' ter down me," was the reply. "They both blazed away at me, an' when I seen ther smoke of your fire so close by I jest made a bolt ter git here. I reckon they must have seen it, too, or they would have come right on. I'm mighty glad——"

Crang!

The speaker made a grab at the side of his head and uttered a cry of alarm.

But Young Wild West was keeping as much of a watch in the direction the man had come from as he was listening to what was said.

He saw the smoke that came from the rifle that had spoken, and in the twinkle of an eye the butt of his own Winchester was at his shoulder.

Crang!

A yell of agony which followed told that the bullet had not gone wild.

"I reckon I got one of them, anyhow," said the dashing young deadshot, coolly. "Get behind the rocks, boys. The other galoot might take a notion to keep it up."

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart quickly pulled the ragged stranger behind a clump of rocks.

Our hero, with his eyes fixed at the row of high shrubbery at the top of the hill, backed behind a rock and crouched to wait for further evidences of hostility.

But none came.

The only thing that occurred to break the stillness of the early morning was a rustling in the bushes right at the spot where the boy had sent his bullet.



Cheyenne Charlie raised his rifle, as though to shoot, but Wild quickly stopped him.

"Don't, Charlie!" he said. "The fellow I shot is being removed, that's all. I hardly think I killed him. I suppose he is wounded, and his friend is trying to get him to a place of safety. So long as they let us alone we'll let them alone."

"I s'pose they'll clean out what little of an outfit I've got left," spoke up the ragged stranger, shaking his head, sadly. "They've been after me fur two days, but I managed ter keep out of their way until this mornin', when they come upon me unawares an' started ter blaze inter me. My camp is right up there, not more'n a hundred yards from here. I got there late last night, an' I went ter sleep without any supper, jest ter keep from makin' a noise, or a light. I knowed ther two galoots was after me, an' I didn't want 'em ter find me. But they did, it seems."

Young Wild West hardly heard the last of what he said.

He was on his way up the hill now.

The villains were not going to clean out the man's outfit, not if he could prevent it, and he was of the strong opinion that he could.

Attired in his fancy hunting suit of buckskin, with his long, light chestnut hair hanging below his shoulders, the handsome young deadshot impressed the ragged man so much as he made his way stealthily up the hill that he gave vent to an exclamation of surprise and admiration.

"That's what I call a splendid, young feller," he said. "I'll bet he kin lick his weight in wilcats! I kin tell by ther way he looks."

"I reckon you're right, stranger," retorted Cheyenne Charlie, as he straightened up his tall form and gave his heavy black mustache a twist or two at the ends. "That's Young Wild West, ther Champion Deadshot of ther West. He's called ther Prince of ther Saddle, ther Lasso King, an' a dozen other nicknames, every one of which he's got a right ter. Don't make no mistake about him, stranger! He's only a boy, but he's all wool an' a yard wide, with plenty of gold lace all around ther edges! Young Wild West ain't got his match ther world over, an' don't yer furgit it!"

"Seems ter me I've heard somethin' about him, pard. But what's he up ter now?"

"He's goin' ter save your outfit, of course. If yer happen ter hear a gun bark presently you'll know that yer ain't got so many enemies as yer had. Wild don't miss when he shoots at anything; it ain't his way."

"I'm mighty glad yer was so close by me, indeed I am," declared the man, fervently. "My name is Kent Springer, an' I'm a prospector in ther hardest kind of luck jest now. I ain't got enough grub ter feed a hungry cat, an' ther most of my prospectin' tools is lost. I'm sartin I know where there's plenty of gold, too; an' that makes it all ther worse."

"Don't git discouraged, Springer. It's always darkest jest afore dawn, they say. If you know where there's gold you'll git it, see if yer don't. You've jest struck ther right kind of people, you have. You'll git helped out."

"I'm awful glad I struck—I am, sure!"

There were tears in the honest eyes of the speaker, and putting out his hand to Charlie, he added:

"Shake with me, won't yer?"

"I sartinly will," was the reply.

Then he turned to Jim Dart, who also gave him a hearty grip.

Then Kent Springer learned that he was talking to Jim Dart, a Wyoming boy, and Cheyenne Charlie, the scout and Indian-fighter.

That he was more than pleased with them goes without saying.

Meanwhile we will see what Young Wild West was doing.

The dashing young deadshot reached the bushes at the top of the hill, and pushing his way cautiously through them, he came in sight of the camp of the man, who had fled to them for help.

There was little there save a couple of blankets and a few battered cooking utensils and a pick and shovel.

A horse was tied to a sapling close by, while near it were two others, saddled and bridled.

Near these lay a wounded man, with his partner bending over him.

Wild no sooner took in the situation than he decided to walk right up to them.

He went boldly, his rifle swung over his shoulders and his hands empty.

But the revolver showed in the holster on either side of him, and it would scarcely take an instant for him to draw one of them, should it become necessary.

"Hello, you sneaking coyotes!"

The boy spoke as coolly as though he was positive that there was no more to be feared from them than if they had been a pair of jack-rabbits.

The man, who was bending over the prostrate one, started to his feet and placed his hand on a revolver.

"Quit that, you scoundrel! If you try to pull that gun I'll lay you out alongside the other galoot! I mean what I say!"

It was wonderful to see how quickly the villain took heed.

"I ain't done nothin' ter you," he spoke up, showing great uneasiness. "My pard has got his medicine; he's goin' ter cash in his chips mighty soon, an' I'm tryin' ter ease him a little. Let us alone, won't yer?"

Wild stepped up and took a look at the wounded man.

It did not take him more than a couple of seconds to see that the man had spoken the truth.

The wounded fellow was unconscious, and his breath was coming in quick, short gasps.

"I reckon he'll never know anything," he said, shaking his head. "Let him alone. He got his medicine because he deserved it; and that is just what will happen to you, too. You may not get your billet now, but you'll get it later on. You tried hard to kill the man you have been hounding so long, and one of you went down on account of it. You'll get your dose next, you sneaking galoot!"

Just then the man on the ground expired.

"It's all over," said our hero, shrugging his shoulders. "I am responsible for it, for I fired the shot. Now then, you had better take the body away and bury it. You heard what I said a minute ago. It will be your turn pretty soon. I know a man when I see him, and I can tell that you are one of the sort who would commit mar-



der for the sake of getting a handful of gold! I am not deceived to you. Light out, you coward!"

The boy had drawn a revolver now, and as the muzzle was pointed his way, the surviving villain lost no time in obeying.

Leaving the body of his pard on the ground, he hastily mounted one of the horses.

He was about to catch the bridle rein of the other and ride away with him, when Wild exclaimed:

"Leave that horse where he is. I want you to come back and bury your dead after we get through here. Then you can take the horse and do as you please with him."

"All right, young feller. You've got ther bulge on me, an' I've got ter do jest as yer say, I s'pose."

"Certainly you have. If you don't you'll get your medicine, that's all."

The villain rode away, taking a winding trail that led up the mountainside.

Young Wild West watched him closely until he disappeared behind a bend two hundred yards away, and then he called out:

"Come on up here, boys!"

The next minute Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart came upon the scene, followed by Kent Springer, the ragged prospector.

"I reckon you can move your outfit down to our camp, my friend," said the young deadshot, addressing the latter. "Then we'll have breakfast."

## CHAPTER II.

### WILD PROMISES TO "GRUB STAKE" THE PROSPECTOR.

The girls were anxiously awaiting the return of Young Wild West and his partners, and then they saw them coming, accompanied by a ragged stranger, who was leading a horse.

But they already knew of his presence, for they had seen him come running down the hill, and had noticed all that took place after that, as far as it was possible for them to do so.

Though Wild and his partners always spoke of them as the "girls," Anna, the wife of the scout, was well past the age of twenty.

Arietta Murdock and Eloise Gardner were girls all right. Some might have called them children, though the chances are that they would not have been much pleased to hear it.

Arietta, a real girl of the West, was Young Wild West's sweetheart, and so well had she tried to emulate him in certain ways that she could shoot with either a rifle or revolver as well as the majority of cowboys and hunters; while she could ride and handle a horse with a skill that was really remarkable.

With Anna and Eloise it was different. They had not been born and reared in the West, and what they had learned about shooting and riding had been done in a little over two years.

But they had become quite expert at both, and they

were capable of giving a good account of themselves when danger threatened them, and they were put to the test.

Ever since he had struck it rich in the Black Hills, and had accumulated money enough to permit it, Young Wild West had enjoyed life by riding through the various parts of the West, where the country was of the wildest, and where law and order were almost out of the question, looking for fortune and adventure.

Of the two he liked adventure the most, for he was never happier than when danger threatened, and he was forced to gather his wits together to get out of a tight place.

Excitement was a thing that he gloried in, and he was never more pleased than when he was able to do a good turn for someone who was deserving and in need.

No wonder, then, that his fame had spread through the Wild West.

His partners were of the same inclinations, and as the girls liked to be in their company, there was nothing strange that they should have a liking for the sort of the life they were leading the greater part of the time.

As we find them on this morning in midwinter they were on their way to a mining camp called Roaring Run. It was in the western part of New Mexico, in the Datil Range, and they had heard great stories of the wonderful strikes prospectors had been making.

Young Wild West had figured on reaching the mining camp some time that day, as only about fifty miles intervened, and when they sat down to breakfast it was the intention to start off as soon as it was over with, and the two pack-horses could be loaded by the Chinamen.

But the breakfast had been interrupted by the two shots and the sudden appearance of Kent Springer, the prospector, who was in such hard luck.

Wild quickly introduced Springer to the girls, and then he turned to the cook and said:

"Well, Wing, I reckon you can fetch us something to eat. I didn't quite finish my breakfast, you know."

"Me knowee lat, Misler Wild," was the reply. "Me allee samee gottee plenty nicee venison allee leady, so be."

"Fetch it on, you heathen galoot," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie. "I reckon Hop kin be takin' down ther tents an' loadin' ther pack-horses while we're finishin'."

"Me allee samee wantee eatee my breakfast, too, Misler Charlie," Hop Wah answered, smiling blandly at the scout. "Me no eatee lillie bit, so be."

"Certainly, Hop. Eat your breakfast, by all means," said our hero, while the scout looked at the grinning Celestial and frowned.

The ordinary observer would have said that there was a certain degree of ill-feeling between Cheyenne Charlie and Hop Wah, if they had watched them when they came in contact, in the way of a conversation; but this would have been a mistake.

While it was true that Charlie had a sort of "pick" on Hop, it was not because he did not like him. Quite the contrary, for he would have fought tooth and nail to save him from being killed, or even hurt a little.

But the fact was that Hop was a clever sleight-of-hand performer, and he could handle a pack of cards in such a way that the average professional card sharp would have



been laid in the shade, and many of them had been, we may as well add.

Hop had fooled the scout so many times with the cards, and he had played so many practical jokes, making him the victim, that it was no wonder that he should feel like getting even with him.

But this was very hard to do, as he had found out, and hence he contented himself with trying to worry the Chinaman whenever he got the chance.

But he never managed to do it, for Hop was not the sort of a Chinaman to get worried, when he knew there was no cause for it.

He knew Cheyenne Charlie as well as anyone, and he liked him as well as he did anyone, with the possible exception of Young Wild West.

The dashing young deadshot was a great person, indeed, to the clever Chinaman, and he stood ready to do his slightest bidding at all times.

Wild had befriended him, and Hop had never forgotten it, though he had paid the debt many times by being the means of saving the lives of the deadshot boy and his friends—by his clever sleight-of-hand work, and not by fighting.

Cheyenne Charlie said no more, so the breakfast was continued, our hero casting an occasional glance at the top of the brush-covered hill, as he no doubt felt that it was possible that the villain he had forced to leave the spot might return and seek vengeance.

But this did not happen, and the breakfast was eaten.

No one attempted to question the prospector while he was eating, for he ate almost ravenously, and it could easily be guessed that it was the first square meal he had partaken of in some time.

When he had done Charlie turned to him and said:

"Got a pipe, pard?"

"Yes," was the reply; "but it ain't been much good ter me fur ther last few days, since I ain't had no to-backer."

"Well, I've got plenty of that. Load up an' enjoy yourself. Then maybe you'll feel like tellin' us somethin' about yourself."

"Yes, I want ter tell yer all about myself," was the quick reply. "But it ain't very much that I kin tell, fur all that. I've been in ther West all my life, but it wasn't till about six months ago that I took a notion ter gold huntin'. I've always been ranchin' since I was a boy, but when I got burned out last March I made up my mind that I'd try my luck at prospectin'. I only had about three hundred dollars, fur I wasn't insured fur a penny when ther fire come an' cleaned me out, an' I gives my wife half of ther money, lettin' her go ter live with her sister in Santa Fe till I come back rich, an' I strikes out. I've had a tough old time of it, I kin tell yer. But if I could only git one more grub stake I know I'd win out. When I say I know it I mean jest what I say, ladies an' gents, 'cause I ain't jest dependin' on luck now. I was told where there was gold—some of it already dug out—but I ain't been able ter git to ther place yet. I made up my mind yisterday that I'd have ter do somethin' mighty quick, an' I reckoned I would set out for Roaring Run an' take someone in with me. I had ter git a grub stake, or there'd be no use, yer know."

"I see," said our hero, who was much interested in what the man said. "You know there is gold in a certain place, but you haven't been able to find the place yet?"

"That's it, Young Wild West. You've got it jest right. But, let me tell yer, I would have found ther place afore this if it hadn't been that I was bein' follered by them two galoots what tried ter clean me out this mornin'. Yer see, they sorter think that I've found ther spot, an' they've been tryin' ter make me tell 'em where it is. I told 'em I hadn't found it a dozen times, but they wouldn't believe me. At last they must have made up their minds ter kill me jest fur spite."

"How did they find out anything about it?" Jim Dart asked.

"Well, it was them what killed ther man what told me about it. They shot him down 'cause he wouldn't take 'em in as pards, an' I happened ter come along where he lay dyin'. I done ther best I could fur him, an' afore he passed in his chips he told me about ther place where ther gold was so plentiful. He didn't live long enough ter give much of a description about it, so that makes it a little hard ter find. But it's somewhere around this part, all right. I'm sartin of that. But I've got ter grub stake myself somehow afore I kin look any further. That's somethin' sure! Why, jest look at what's left of my outfit! There ain't enough of it ter do much gold minin', I reckon."

"No! I should say not," answered Young Wild West, as he glanced at the few belongings of the prospector.

"It's mighty rough on me; but I've been through ther ups an' downs of life putty well, an' I ain't goin' ter give up yet. I'll git someone ter grub stake me, if I have ter promise ther one what does it half of what I git. I'm goin' ter find that gold, 'cause it's mine by right. Ther dyin' man didn't even tell me his name, but he did say that he hadn't a relative that he knowed of, or cared about, an' that it was ter be mine if I found it. Jake Platt an' Ike Bones knowed that he knowed where so much gold was, an' when they couldn't git him ter take 'em in as pards in ther game they jest shot him. I'm glad that Jake Platt got his medicine, too! I wish Ike Bones had showed himself, so he could have got a bullet, too. They're murderers of ther worst kind, an' they deserved shootin' on sight. I couldn't do it, 'cause I ain't had no cartridge in a whole week. I couldn't even shoot anything ter eat. That's why I was well-nigh starved when yer found me."

"Well, Kent Springer, you needn't look any further. I'll grub stake you," said Wild, nodding to the ragged prospector. "You will come with us to Roaring Run, and I'll fix you up with an outfit that is as good as can be bought. Then you can strike out again and look for the gold that you are so certain that exists. How does that strike you?"

"Do yer mean what yer say, Young Wild West?" cried the man, acting as though he had not heard aright. "Are you goin' ter grub stake a man yer never seen afore?"

"That is just what I am going to do, Kent Springer. I reckon I know a man when I see him. I consider you to be an honest man, and that you firmly believe that the gold is to be found. If you fail to find it you won't owe



me one dollar; and if you do strike luck you can pay me back. I reckon that's a square deal, isn't it?"

"A square deal! Why, it's blamed sight more than a square deal, Young Wild West. But say! Your money won't be throwed away. You grub stake me, an' I'll do ther rest. Do yer know one thing?"

"What is that?"

"It's goin' ter be Young Wild West's grub stake what'll make a fortune."

"All right. I hope it does."

"It will. Say! Will yer shake hands with me, my boy?"

"I certainly will."

As Wild took the man's hand he noticed that the tears were coursing freely down the rugged cheeks. The eyes that looked upon him expressed thankfulness and sincerity to an extent that he had seldom seen before, and he knew that Kent Springer was all right.

But whether he would ever succeed in finding the gold or not, was another thing.

Wild hoped he would, of course.

"There's only one thing I'm afraid of," said Springer, as they were getting ready to set out for the mining camp, "and that is that Ike Bones will go to Roaring Run an' git some men what's jest about ther kind he is ter come with him an' hunt me. Ike Bones believes that ther gold is up this way somewhere, an' he wants ter git it mighty bad. He knows more about it than I do, I reckon, 'cause him an' Jake Platt was with ther man they killed a few days afore I found 'em. I hope ther galoot has had enough of it, from what happened ter his pard, ter make him let me alone."

"Well, I reckon if he gets anyone to go with him for the purpose of robbing you of the claim we'll take a hand in the game," answered our hero. "We'll take care of Ike Bones, Springer. I reckon we'll come out this way, anyhow. We'll follow you up, though we won't interfere with you in your search for the gold. That's yours, you know. We don't want any of it."

"Why can't yer help me find it, Young Wild West? I'm willin' ter trust you an' your friends. Yer might know I'd do that, after you bein' kind enough ter grub stake me. Jest say that you'll come back with me ter find ther gold! Go on an' say it, please."

"All right, Springer. I reckon we'll come back with you; and if the dying man told you facts you can bet we'll come mighty near finding it, too!"

"Hooray!" shouted the prospector, waving his ragged hat.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE ARRIVAL AT ROARING RUN.

"Whee-ow! Whoopee! Wow-wow! Look out, thar! I'm ther worst man what ever lived when I'm mad! I'm likely ter explode at any minute! Look out thar! I'm goin' ter clean up them two Chinamen in a hurry! Make 'em dance a little afore I drop 'em! Whee-ow!"

The scene was the centre of the mining camp called

Roaring Run, and the speaker was a big, raw-boned man, whose attire consisted of a flaming red shirt, torn sombrero and corduroy trousers that were tucked in a pair of high-topped boots.

He stood in the middle of the sandy street, in front of the Red Light Saloon, facing a small party of riders that had just struck the camp, and on either side a number of rough-looking men were gathered, waiting to see what would happen.

The party of riders consisted of Young Wild West and his friends. It was late in the afternoon, and in company with Kent Springer they had just struck Roaring Run.

Of course the "bad man" alluded to Hop and Wing, the two Chinamen belonging to the party.

He had emerged from the saloon just in time to see them coming up the single street of the camp, and the moment he laid eyes on the Celestials he began to make himself heard.

The "bad man" was unquestionably drunk, and to see him waving a brace of six-shooters, and hear his loud, threatening words, one not used to the ways of mining camps might have become frightened, for he certainly looked as though he was ready to wind up the career of the two heathens.

Kent Springer grew uneasy right away.

"That's Bad Jud, the worst man in the camp," he said, speaking to Young Wild West. "He don't like Chinamen, I reckon, an' ther chances is that he'll wipe 'em out. There ain't no doin' anything with Bad Jud when he gits on ther rampage. He's a sure shot, an' he don't care who he kills, either. He's a mighty bad character."

"Is that so?" our hero asked, coolly. "Well, just let him try his game, that's all. I'll soon take the starch out of the galoot. We have met lots of his kind in our travels, eh, boys?"

"You bet we have!" Cheyenne Charlie answered. "I reckon he'll soon be glad ter sneak away an' set down in some place where he can't be seen. Don't yer worry about him, Springer."

"That's right," spoke up Jim Dart. "He is one of the harmless sort, and you can rest easy on that. He'll change his tune directly."

The prospector looked at the girls, and when he saw that they did not appear to be much disturbed he seemed surprised.

Hop and Wing did not show any particular signs of fear, either, and Springer began to think that maybe it was all right, after all.

The bad man continued to yell at the top of his voice, and when Wild and Arietta, at the head of the little party, got within a dozen feet of him he suddenly ceased his antics and gave them a look that was probably meant to frighten them half to death.

"What's the matter with you, you big galoot?" asked Wild, coolly. "Get out of the way, or I'll run over you!"

"What's that?" roared the bad man, looking astonished. "You talk ter me like that, you young whipper-snapper! I'll make you——"

Crack!

Crack!

Young Wild West pulled one of his revolvers, and as quick as a flash he fired twice in quick succession.



Bad Jud was waving his guns over his head at the time, and when the boy's gun spoke twice they dropped to the ground.

Then as the sorrel stallion Wild was riding made a leap toward him, the bad man let out a cry of fear and bolted for the saloon.

"Great wildcats!" exclaimed the prospector. "Did yer ever see anything like that?"

"Not quite as bad, at least, not in a long time," answered Arietta, laughing heartily. "My! what a coward!"

The miners on both sides of the street had been remarkably silent while the bad man had the floor—or the ground, speaking literally, but as he ran into the saloon a yell went up that was plainly one of pure, unadulterated delight.

The chances are that the miners witnessing the incident were afraid of the bad man, more or less, and to see him knocked off his perch so suddenly by a mere boy was quite sufficient to make them give vent to their delight.

Young Wild West rode to the very door of the shanty tavern, as though he was bent on going right in after the man.

Those standing in front of it got out of the way in a hurry.

The boy smiled at them and called out:

"Whoa, Spitfire! I reckon there's no use in going in after the galoot. He'd only run out of the back door. We'll let him go for the present."

Just then the keeper of the saloon stepped up before him, and bowing politely, said:

"It's all right, Young Wild West. I never seen yer afore, but I know yer, from what I've heard others say. Yer sartinly took all ther starch out of Bad Jud. He's in ther barroom puttin' court-plaster on ther back of his hands, where yer skinned him with your bullets. I'm mighty glad ter see Jud git trimmed, an' I ain't afraid ter say it. Wow!"

He let out a yell, which the crowd joined in, and the next minute the party was surrounded by the miners, all of whom wore smiling faces.

Wild looked up at the big, roughly-painted sign that ran clear across the building and read it he gave a nod, and looking at the boss, observed:

"Red Light Saloon, eh? Licensed Gambling Joint, and Dance Hall; Bar in the Rear? Tom Clark, proprietor! Good! Are you Tom Clark?"

"That's me," came the reply. "An' I'm mighty glad ter see yer in ther camp, Young Wild West! Don't say that yer ain't ther Champion Deadshot, 'cause I know I can't be mistaken in yer. There ain't no other one livin' as could have clipped ther two guns out of Bad Jud's hands like you done jest now. I was lookin' through ther winder, an' I seen it all. Ther very second I seen yer yank out your gun I knowed somethin' was goin' ter happen. Blamed if somethin' didn't happen, too! It was ther best I ever seen, an' I've seen a whole lot in my travelin's between Denver an' San Jose! Wow! But didn't Bad Jud git it, boys?"

The man was plainly delighted at what had happened, and our hero quickly came to this conclusion.

It was evident that Bad Jud had not a man in the crowd he could call his friend.

But there was nothing so very strange about this, since they all appeared to be honest miners, who believed in minding their own business.

That the most of them knew Kent Springer was evident, for some of them called him by name, and all seemed to be anxious to know how he had made out on his prospecting trip.

"Had ter come back ter stock up, boys," he answered to their inquiries. "But I'm goin' ter start out ag'in in ther mornin'. I'll land all right yet, see if I don't."

The smiles that appeared on the faces of the men told how little they believed he would.

"Better stay right here, Kent," said one. "Ther slowest way is sometimes the surest way ter git rich. Yer kin make a little more than a livin' here, an' that's a whole lot, I reckon. By ther looks of yer, you've had a putty hard time of it."

"I have, but luck has changed now," was the reply.

"Any place here to put up at, Springer?" asked Wild, as he turned his horse to the middle of the street.

"Nope!" was the retort. "I reckon you'll have ter go in camp. 'Come on; I'll show yer a good place ter put up ther tents. There ain't a shanty in ther camp what's got accommodations fur all of yer. You'll be a blamed sight better off in ther open air."

"Well, that's about what I thought. Show the way."

The miners cheered them as they rode on up the street.

Right elose to the general store they turned to a little grove that was situated on the bank of a mountain stream.

"Here yer are," said Springer, as he dismounted. "I reckon no one will bother us here."

The next minute all hands had dismounted and the work of getting the camp in shape was begun.

The sun was still half an hour high, and the miners had just quit their work when our friends rode into the town.

Bad Jud had not been at work that day; he had been celebrating the strike he had made the day previous, and he evidently thought that to do the thing right he must kill a couple of Chinamen.

But that part of the programme had been cut short, and it is safe to say that he had lost considerable of his prestige in the mining camp.

There were at least two in our party of friends who were pleased at reaching the mining camp.

They were Cheyenne Charlie and Hop Wah. The former because he was very fond of having rows with the alleged "bad men" that were always to be found in such places, and the latter because there was a chance for him to get all the "tanglefoot" he wanted and to get in a game of draw poker.

The tents were soon erected, the prospector helping, and then a fire was kindled and Wing, the cook, got busy preparing the evening meal.

Before it was yet dark they were all eating supper, and when this was over Wild called Kent Springer to go to the store with him.

"I'm going to grub stake you now," our hero said. "You can bet that you are going to start out in proper shape this time."

"Thank you, Wild," was the earnest retort. "I won't never forgit yer fur your kindness. But you ain't goin' ter lose nothin' by this, an' I know it."



## CHAPTER IV.

## HOP ENTERTAINS AT THE RED LIGHT.

Wild and the prospector had scarcely left the camp when Hop Wah slipped quietly away.

He headed for the Red Light Saloon, of course, but he took care to go around behind the store, so he would not be seen by our hero.

The Chinaman thought it possible that he might be called back if he was seen going that way.

Cheyenne Charlie was watching him, however, and with a grin on his tanned face, he turned to Jim and the girls and said:

"Ther heathen has gone ter look fur his tanglefoot an' a game of poker, I reckon. I'll jest foller him an' see that he don't git in no trouble. That galoot what was so anxious ter clean out our two Chinamen might take a notion ter put it on him, jest fur spite now."

No one objected to the scout's proposition, so he headed for the saloon.

But he went around the front of the store and took it easy.

He was just in time to see Hop going in, and keeping along at a slow walk, he got there about a minute later.

The Celestial stood before the bar, a bottle and glass in front of him and a smile that was "child-like and bland" on his yellow countenance.

Quite a few of the population of the mining camp had assembled.

Some of them hung close to the bar, others stood around in groups, talking over what had happened during the day, and others were in the gambling room, playing cards and bucking the faro and roulette games.

The bar was in the rear room of the building, and it could be entered from the side as well as the front.

Most of those who wanted something to drink, and nothing more, went in that way, as Hop and the scout had done.

"Hello, Hop!" said Charlie. "I reckon you're goin' ter treat, ain't yer?"

"Lat light, Misler Charlie," was the reply. "Whattée you havee? Me dlink um tanglefoot allee samee stlaight, so be."

"Well, I reckon I kin stand one of ther same kind, Hop. I don't believe in takin' too much, like you do, though."

"Me no takee too muchee, Misler Charlie," and the Chinaman shook his head. "Me allee samee knowee when me gottee 'nough, so be."

"Yes, but you've generally got more than enough when yer find it out, I reckon," and the scout laughed.

Charlie got what he wanted and Hop paid the bill.

Bad Jud, the so-called "Worst Man in the Camp," was not present, and those of the miners who were seemed to regard the Celestial kindly.

There were no signs of any trouble there, that was sure.

"You allee samee tleat now, Misler Charlie?" asked Hop, after he had waited a reasonable length of time, as he thought.

"Yes, but it'll be to cigars," was the reply. "Land-

lord, shove out a box of somethin' that's good. I'd rather have a pipe than a poor cheroot, any time."

"Well, I've got ther real Havanners, I reckon," was the reply. "They're fifty cents straight; I can't sell 'em fur anything less, an' make a reasonable profit."

"Sartin yer can't, not if they're real Havanners. Let's try 'em."

The box was passed out, and though Charlie was not the best judge in the world, he could easily guess that there was nothing in the way of Havanna tobacco in the cigars:

But there was no use of disputing the landlord's word, since he could not prove it.

Hop took one, too, and then they both lighted up and puffed away.

But the Chinaman had changed his cigar for one he had in his pocket, and he had not smoked it down more than a quarter of an inch when it exploded with the noise of a firecracker.

"Whattée mattee?" he cried, affecting great alarm. "You allee samee tly blowee up um poor Chinee, so be."

"Great ginger!" exclaimed the boss of the saloon. "What was ther matter with that cigar? Some galoot must have put powder in it, I reckon. Did it burn yer any?"

"No burnee, for me allee samee holdee in um hand when um go off bang! Velly muchee funny, so be."

"Yes, I should say it was funny. I don't understand it."

No one did understand it but the Chinaman and Charlie.

The latter knew Hop's tricks pretty well, and he was quite certain that he had changed a cigar for a trick one he had with him.

"Me no likee lat," Hop declared, as he picked up the ruins of the cigar, which he had hurriedly thrown down as soon as it exploded. "Me havee lillee tanglefoot pletty quickee; me allee samee velly muchee nervous, so be."

"Here yer are," answered the proprietor, quickly, as he pushed the bottle to him. "Jest help yourself; drink at my expense. I'm mighty sorry there was anything wrong with ther cigar. I sartinly paid good money fur 'em, an' if ther galoot what sold 'em ter me was only here I'd make him a fit subject fur ther undertaker, yer kin bet!"

"Lat allee light. Me no blamee you," and Hop took the bottle and poured out a drink.

Then, instead of putting the bottle back upon the counter, he slipped it under his coat, into one of his capacious pockets.

He swallowed the contents of the glass without cracking a smile, and then calmly lighted the very cigar the man had given him before the strange happening.

Tom Clark, of the Red Light Saloon, looked at Cheyenne Charlie, but for the space of a full minute he said nothing.

The scout grinned and nodded for him to make the Chinaman produce the bottle.

"Say!" he said, looking at Hop, who was the most unconcerned person in the room just then—apparently. "I reckon you're what they sorter calls absent-minded, ain't yer?"

"Me no undelstand," was the reply.



"You put my bottle of tanglefoot in your pocket."

"Oh!" and the face of the Chinaman brightened instantly. "Me makee lillee mistakee, so be. Excusee me."

Then he quickly handed out the bottle—or one that looked just like it, rather—and it rested upon the bar.

Hop was generally prepared for just such a thing as had happened.

He had brought a bottle half filled with water to the saloon, and that was what he now placed upon the bar.

The one containing the tanglefoot, as he called it, was still in his pocket.

It happened that a miner came in just then and wanted a drink of whisky.

A glass was furnished him and the bottle pushed over to him.

Then it was that the trick was discovered.

"What do yer think I am?" asked the customer, angrily. "It's an insult ter give me water, don't yer know that, Tom?"

"Water?" echoed the boss, as he looked in amazement at the glass before him. "By ginger, it sartinly looks like it!"

"Velly stlange," commented Hop, shaking his head in a puzzled way. "Me no see anytling like lat before, so be."

But Charlie did not mean to let the clever Chinaman get away with the whisky.

"That ain't ther bottle he took," he spoke up. "He's been playin' some of his sleight-of-hand on yer, boss. He's got ther bottle of whisky somewhere under his coat. Watch me, an' I'll show yer how I kin smash it with a bullet."

As if he meant to do as he said, the scout drew his revolver.

Hop gave a cry of alarm and quickly produced the bottle he had stolen.

"Me only havee lillee fun, Misler Charlie," he declared. "Lat allee light."

Those looking on were amazed.

There were the two bottles on the counter, and it happened that they were so nearly alike that no one could have discovered the difference.

"Well, that's putty good!" exclaimed the boss, smiling at the Chinaman. "You're ther smartest heathen I've ever run across, an' I've spent a few years in Californy, too."

"Well, they turn out many smart heathens, like he is," the scout answered. "But ther worst of it is that he gits too smart sometimes. This are one of them times, I reckon."

There were now about a dozen men standing around the clever Chinaman.

They were eager to see him do something more in the line of sleight-of-hand business.

One of them asked him to, declaring that he would treat him if he would.

"Allee light," answered Hop, sizing him up carefully, and coming to the conclusion that he would make an easy victim. "Me showee you velly nicee lillee tlick, so be."

The miner wore a new hat that had a very high crown, as well as a wide brim.

"You let me havee you hat, so be," Hop said, blandly; "me no hurtee."

"All right," was the reply. "Jest see ter it that yer don't hurt it. I give eight dollars fur that hat down in Silver City."

Hop took the hat, made out that he was examining the inside carefully and then gave a start of surprise.

"You allee samee play dlaw poken, so be," he said, and he drew out a pack of cards.

"Yes, I play dlaw poker, all right; I didn't know them cards was in my hat, though," said the man, looking much surprised.

"You allee samee chuckee dice, too," went on Hop, just as though he had not heard what he said. "You allee samee velly muchee sport, so be."

Out came a leather dice cup, with the dice in it.

Exclamations of amazement went up from those in the room.

It was only an oldtime trick, but none of them appeared to have seen it before, or if they had they did not think it possible that the "heathen Chineee" could fool them in that way.

Hop meant to give them a good surprise while he was at it.

He kept slipping various articles he had about him into the hat, no one catching him at it, since his hands were quicker than their eyes.

Even the scout could not catch him doing it, and he had seen him perform the trick many times before.

"You mustee havee lillee baby," resumed Hop, as he drew a rubber doll from the hat. "You allee samee velly nicee man, so be."

This caused a laugh, for the miner was a single man.

He turned red in the face and exclaimed:

"See here! I don't know how them things got into my hat, blamed if I do!"

Hop shook his head.

"Me no knowee, too, so be," he declared.

Then he pulled out three or four yards of cheap ribbon.

"You mustee havee girl, so be," he ventured.

There was another laugh, for the rest of the audience regarded it as a great joke.

"Yes! Now me knowee you allee samee gottee girl!" cried Hop, as though he was much astonished. Then he pulled out a woman's hat that had a big colored feather and some ribbon attached to it.

This provoked such a roar of laughter that the victim of the joke became enraged.

"Hold on!" he yelled, pulling his gun. "I reckon I ain't no blamed fool. I want you all ter know that I never put them things in ther hat. How they got there is a mystery, but I didn't put 'em there, that's sartin. What would I be doin' with sich trash, anyhow? Stop yer laughin', or I'll begin ter let lead fly!"

"Put up your gun, pard," said Cheyenne Charlie, coolly. "Don't yer know that ther heathen is a magician? You was ther one what wanted him ter show yer a trick, an' now you've got ter take your medicine."

"Well, I ain't goin' ter be made a fool of, an' that's all there is ter it! I won't stand it from him, or you, either."



"Yes, yer will! Go ahead, Hop."

The scout whipped out one of his six-shooters as quick as a flash, and he had the miner covered when he spoke the words.

"That's a little different, I s'pose," the victim said, after a pause, and back to the holster went his gun.

But when Hop pulled out an infant's dress that hung to the floor when he shook it out, his victim could stand it no longer, and turning, he left the room, while the laughter of the others rang in his ears.

Hop took a few more minor articles from the hat for the amusement of the rest, and then he put the hat on a table and gathered up the articles.

He made them disappear so rapidly that the miners and saloonkeeper were ready to bet that he was the most wonderful magician that ever lived.

But Hop had made a deep impression with them, and it is safe to say that there was not one there who was not willing to stick by him, in case he got into any trouble.

## CHAPTER V.

### AN INTERESTING GAME.

Young Wild West found that he could get everything at the store that the prospector would need, and he was not long in making the selection.

He bought enough provisions to last him a month, as well as cooking utensils, blankets and the implements he needed to do mining with.

"I reckon yer must think it are goin' ter take me a good while ter land ther gold, Wild," Springer said, as he looked over the pile of stuff he had. "I don't know how I'm ever goin' ter git away with all this."

"You've got to have a pack-horse, of course," Wild answered. "I reckon one can be got around here."

"I've got a mule that I'll sell cheap," spoke up the storekeeper. "He's a mighty lazy one, but he'll be jest ther thing fur that kind of work."

"All right. I reckon a mule will do just as well as a horse in this case. We'll take a look at him, if you don't mind."

Leaving the store in charge of his clerk, the proprietor took them out to the stable.

The mule suited Wild, so he bought and paid for it right there.

"Now you're all right, Kent," he said. "If you don't succeeded this time it won't be because you haven't been grub staked."

"That's what's ther matter, Wild! My! but I never would have thought I'd find a friend like you. But you're goin' out with me, yer said; why are yer fixin' me up jest as if I was goin' it all alone?"

"Because I want you to start out that way. We'll come along after you, and probably join you later. We will be on hand in case you get into trouble, and you can bet on that!"

"I know yer will. But yer might jest as well come along with me, from ther start. Yer wouldn't have ter buy half ther things yer did, then."

"Well, I told you I was going to grub stake you, and I wanted to keep my word. You are all fixed now to go where you please. If you have good luck you can pay me back; but if you don't we'll call it square, as I said before. I reckon you haven't got a thing to worry about on that score. You just strike out whenever you like, and if you do happen to strike it rich in a hurry it will be all the better."

"An' you'll come along right after me, won't yer?"

"Yes."

"Good! I don't s'pose I've seen ther last of Ike Bones yet. He ain't ther kind of a galoot ter give up a thing very easy, even if he has lost his pard. It's my opinion that he'll find somebody ter go in with him, an' that he'll do his best ter clean me out an' git ther gold."

"Let him try it! I reckon you'll be a little fixed for him. I'll see to it that you have a good Winchester rifle to start out with. We always carry a couple of extra ones with us, you know. You've got a good revolver, so all you need is plenty of cartridges. You ought to make it interesting for Ike Bones, if he happens to interfere with you."

"Well, I've always been a mighty peaceable man, an' I never liked ter do much fightin'. But this time it'll be different. Ike Bones helped kill ther man what told me where ter go ter find ther gold, an' he ought ter die fur it, I s'pose. Still, I don't like ter shoot him, or anyone else. It ain't my way."

"Maybe you'd rather be shot than to shoot. Is that it?"

"Well, not exactly that. But——"

"I see that you are rather timid about such things. You talk like a tenderfoot, Kent. But I know you are not, of course. I have met fellows like you before. You would be a mighty easy one to rob, I reckon. It is a good thing that you didn't strike the gold before we met you, for if you had it is a pretty safe bet that Ike Bones and Jake Platt would have got it from you, and left you dead near where you found it. But it is all right now, Kent. I reckon we'll go over to the Red Light Saloon now. We'll get the mule and the goods we have bought early in the morning. That will be all right, won't it, boss?"

"Oh, yes," was the storekeeper's reply. "You'll find ther store open afore daylight. I'll have ther mule fed ther first thing in ther mornin', too, so yer won't have ter bother."

"Good! Now we'll go over and see what's goin' on in the Red Light."

It was just getting dark when they came out of the store, for it had taken them some little time to buy what was needed for Young Wild West's Grub Stake, as Kent Springer persisted on calling it.

"Kent," said Wild, as they neared the saloon, "I reckon you'd better tell the miners about Ike Bones, and what he and his pard did. It will be a good thing for you, maybe, for if he happens to venture here they'll take care that he don't get away again. The men here have no use for murderers, you know."

"That's right, Wild. Well, I'll tell 'em ther whole story, if you think I'd better."

"I do think so."

"About you puttin' up a grub stake fur me, too."



"Well, it isn't necessary for that, as I know of. That hasn't anything to do with Ike Bones."

"Oh, yes, it has. It comes right in with ther story, an' I'm goin' ter let ther boys know what a good friend you've been ter me. There's lots of good fellers in ther camp here, but I'll bet there ain't one of 'em as would have done half fur me as what you have. I was goin' ter try an' git someone ter do it if you hadn't, but I know I would have had a hard time of it. They all know that I've been prospectin' around ther hills fur some time, an' they all seem ter think that I'm makin' a fool of myself. But I'll sorter surprise 'em afore long."

"I hope you do, Kent. But say!"

"What is it, Wild?"

"Come to think of it, I wouldn't let them know anything about what the dying man told you, if I were you. You don't have to, and if you do there may be some who might be tempted to go and look for the place under the rule of 'first come, first served.' Just omit that part of it. You can tell how they shot the man, and how you did what you could for him before he died. That will be enough, I reckon."

"All right, Wild. I'm goin' ter do jest as you say. That's me every time! When a feller befriends me I'm ther one ter put faith in him an' do as he thinks is proper. Put that down, Young Wild West! I ain't ther one as says one thing, an' means another, either."

"I reckon I know about what sort of a man you are by this time, Kent. But here we are. Hello! that Chinaman of a Hop is in there. I hear his voice."

The two walked in.

The gambling room was pretty well filled by this time and the lamps were lighted.

Hop had come in from the little barroom and he was seated at a table, playing cards with four miners.

Sitting on a barrel, smoking a cigar, was Cheyenne Charlie, taking it easy and watching what was going on in the room.

The roulette wheel was spinning and the faro dealer was as busy as could be.

A stranger used to such sights might have remarked that Roaring Run appeared to be a prosperous camp, indeed.

The scout's face brightened when he saw the dashing young deadshot come in.

He was never more pleased than in the company of Wild.

Charlie would have left the place before had not Hop been challenged to sit in a game of poker with the miner he had played the trick upon.

It had not taken a great while to smooth the fellow's ruffled feelings, and when he had seen the clever Chinaman perform a few more tricks he decided that he had made a fool of himself by getting mad.

This man bore the name of Bob White, and his friends had nicknamed him The Quail, because the call of that bird is usually written down as "Bob White."

Hop had no intention to fleece the miners, for he sized them up for honest men, so the game had been going strictly on the level up to the time Wild and the prospector came in.

It happened just then that one of the miners quit the

game, declaring that luck was not with him, and that he did not have enough money to stick, anyhow.

"Allee light," said Hop, smiling blandly. "Maybe somebody likee takee um placee; me likee um fivee-handee gamee, so be."

"I reckon I'll take a hand in that game," called out a heavy-built man, as he came in from the barroom with a swagger. "I make ther best part of my livin' playin' poker, as you galoots know. If you've got sand enough in yer ter let me play I'll jine in."

"That's Fat Robins, Bad Jud's pard," whispered Springer to our hero. "He ain't liked any more than Bad Jud is, I reckon. They won't play with him in ther game, most likely."

"Well, the Chinaman will play with anybody in the game," was the reply. "Hop isn't afraid to tackle the best sharp in the world. I suppose Fat Robins can't play a square game, and that is why the miners won't play with him?"

"Yes, that's jest ther reason. But they are goin' ter keep in tlier game, blamed if they ain't!"

This was a fact. But as Hop had advised the three men at the table to stay in, and that he would see to it that the new player did not fleece them, there was nothing very strange about it.

It happened that Fat Robins had not been around when the trouble between our hero and Bad Jud occurred; but that he had heard all about it was evident, for when our hero moved up close to the table he looked at him uneasily.

"That's all right, my friend," said Wild, noticing the glance. "I am not going to interfere with the game. Go ahead."

"I didn't expect you was goin' ter interfere, young feller," was the retort. "I don't see why yer would. It ain't nothin' ter you."

"Of course not. Go ahead."

"I'm about ther luckiest galoot what ever sat down ter a card table, I am. I kin git more big hands than any seven men in Roarin' Run, ther most of ther time. Oh, I'm a regular poker fiend, all right!"

Wild knew very well that Hop would get the best of him, so he waited to see.

The three miners seemed to be a trifle uneasy, but every time he got the chance the clever Chinaman would nod to them, indicating that it was all right.

The cards were dealt, and the ante was a dollar.

Fat Robins sat next to the miner dealing, and it was he who had put up the ante.

Next to him sat Hop, and with an innocent smile on his face, he watched the proceedings.

That the dealer was doing it straight he knew, but he meant to keep his eye on the stout man.

They all came in on the draw, and when Hop saw Robins take one card he put him down for a bluff right away.

The clever Chinaman had a pair of queens, and he was lucky enough to draw another.

Only one of the three miners happened to get anything worth while, and he stayed in.

He had a heart flush, which was a pretty good hand in a square game.



Fat Robins bet five dollars as a starter and Hop went him ten better, at the same time giving the miner a glance to go on and raise it.

He did so, and then the big ruffian hesitated.

But he was going to do some bluffing, it seemed, and pulling out a bag of gold, he exclaimed:

"I'll make it five hundred better."

"Allee light," said Hop, smilingly. "Me callee you, so be."

The rascal looked at him angrily, for he did not expect anyone would meet him.

The miner went in, too, and then Fat Robins uttered an oath and threw down his hand.

The miner's flush won, and he seemed more than pleased, which no doubt was the case.

Hop did not care for what he had lost on the hand.

He meant to make up for that when it got his turn to deal, if he was not able to before that.

It was Fat Robins' turn to deal now, and he fooled with the cards until he got them the way he wanted them, and then let the man on his right cut them.

He succeeded in getting the winning hand, and the result was that he got back the most of what he had lost.

Then it came Hop's turn to deal.

He shot a swift glance at the three miners, which meant that they were to keep out of it this time, and they understood.

Hop dealt the ruffian four kings, cold.

For himself he dealt four aces.

The miners dropped out, though one of them had a dollar up for an ante.

Fat Robins grinned, and putting in his dollar, said:

"I'll have one card, Heathen."

Hop came up with his dollar and gave him the card.

Then he took one himself.

Of course neither of them needed to take any, since their hands could not be improved upon if they had the pack to pick from.

There were but four of a kind in the deck.

Hop feared that the big ruffian might tumble to what he was doing, but such was not the case.

Fat Robins evidently thought it was mere luck that brought him the four kings, and he meant to go his whole length on the hand.

"I'll bet a hundred," he said, coolly, as he pushed up the amount, and then calmly bit a piece from a tobacco plug. "I'm a gilt-edge poker fiend, I am! I'll bet any time. It don't make no difference what kind of a hand I've got. But this time yer want ter look out fur me, Mister Heathen."

"Me allee samee lookee outee, so be," was the reply. "Me laise you um hundled, allee samee."

"Good! I'll go right along with yer on that. There's a hundred better."

"Lere um hundled better lan you, so be."

"Well, I'll see if you've got any sand in your yaller carcass. I'll go yer five hundred better."

"Allee light. Me gottee plenty money, so be."

To verify what he said, Hop pulled out a roll of bank-notes as thick as his arm and quickly peeled off the amount in hundred-dollar bills.

The eyes of Fat Robins opened wide.

He was pretty well fixed with money himself, but he could not be classed with the Chinaman.

However, he was firmly convinced that he had the winning hand, so he met the bet and raised it another hundred.

Hop went him five hundred more, and then the rascally man found that it would take nearly all he had to call him.

But he did not hesitate about putting it out, remarking as he did so:

"I wouldn't call yer if I was better fixed. I'd set here all night, an' keep right on bettin', too."

"You makee lillee fool of yourself, len," answered Hop, with a smile that was child-like and bland; "me allee samee gottee four lillee aces!"

"What!" roared the astonished villain, bringing his fist upon the table with a bang that caused it to fairly dance. "You're a cheat, you miserable yaller-faced heathen! Ther pot is mine.!"

"Hold on, so be!" said Hop, pulling a big old-fashioned six-shooter from beneath his coat. "Um pot allee samee mine!"

Fat Robins wilted.

A quick glance about the room told him plainly that the crowd was with the Chinaman.

It was just then that Bud Jud appeared in the doorway.

"I want ter see yer, Fat," he called out.

"All right, Jud," answered Fat. "I'm glad you're here. I need somebody ter sympathize with me, I reckon. Ther heathen has made me go broke."

"You allee samee gittee some more money, and len comee back, so be," said Hop, smiling at him, at the same time stuffing away his winnings.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE THREE VILLAINS.

Fat Robins was really glad to be called by the man he called his pard just then.

He knew he would have no show if he tried to fight it out with the Chinaman, for Young Wild West was right there.

Having heard all about what happened to Bad Jud at the hands of the dashing young deadshot, he was not anxious to get in trouble with him.

"What's up, Jud?" he asked, in a low tone of voice, as he followed the man to the barroom in the rear of the shanty structure.

"A whole lot, Fat," was the reply. "I'll tell yer in a minute. We'll have a drink first."

"I wish yer had called me afore I got them four kings," and the defeated gambler shook his head, sadly. "I might have knowed I was up ag'in it when I got 'em cold; but I couldn't see it that way, somehow. Ther heathen fixed them cards very fine, an' I'm blamed if I knowed how he done it. I was watchin' every move he made when he was shufflin' an' dealin' 'em."

"Serves yer right fur goin' in ther game, Fat. Yer



might have knowed that somethin' was up. Didn't yer hear that ther 'Chinee was a magician?"

"No. I didn't. Is that right?"

"Yes, I heard two or three of ther men talkin' about it a little while ago. Why, ther heathen must be a real wonder. He took about a bushel of things out of Ther Quail's hat, an' no one seen him put 'em in first, either! No wonder he could put up ther cards on yer!"

"Well, I put 'em up on him jest afore that, jest ther same."

"Yes, but what good did it do yer, if yer lost all yer had after it?"

"Oh! it didn't do me no good. Well, maybe I'll git a chance ter git ther money back. It'll be funny if I don't"

"You'll git it back all right, an' more, too. That's what I want ter see yer about. Come on; we'll have a drink, an' then I'll take yer outside an' tell yer all about it."

They went to the bar, and when they had satisfied their thirst they left by the side door and went to a clump of bushes in the rear of the saloon.

As they got there Fat was surprised to see a man standing near a tree, as though waiting for them.

Bad Jud chuckled at his show of surprise.

"Didn't expect ter see him, did yer, Fat?" he said. "Don't yer know who he is?"

"Why, blamed if it ain't Ike Bones!"

"That's just who it is. He's come here jest ter git me an' you ter go in with him on a big deal fur a gold mine. What do yer think of that, Fat?"

"A big deal fur a gold mine, eh? Well, I reckon if there's anything in it yer kin count on me every time."

"There's somethin' in it, Fat," spoke up the man near the tree, who was no other than the villain who had been hounding Kent Springer. "It's a dead sure game, an' no mistake."

"He's right on that, Fat," said Bad Jud. "Now, listen! I was jest down to ther store, an' I heard ther storekeeper tellin' one of his friends how Young Wild West had grub staked Kent Springer, so he could go an make another search fur ther gold that's in ther hills back here a ways. He's goin' out alone, but Young Wild West an' his gang is goin' ter foller him up, jest fur ther purpose of seein' ter it that you don't interfere in ther game, Ike. I told yer that, yer know."

"Yes, I know all about it. Go on an' tell Fat. We want him ter know jest how things stand. Then maybe he'll be willin' ter go in ther game with us."

That Bad Jud had heard a great deal from the storekeeper was quite certain, for what he said was in strict accord with the conversation Young Wild West and Kent Springer had in the store.

This was quite enough to convince him that the gold was going to be found, and the fact that Young Wild West and his friends were going to follow up the prospector made him think that there was going to be a chance for him to be revenged upon the boy for what had happened early in the evening.

Bad Jud was of a vengeful disposition, anyhow, though he was a coward.

He had met Ike Bones skulking around the outskirts of

the camp, afraid to show himself for what he had done out upon the mountainside, and it was not long before they came to an agreement and decided upon a plan of action.

Of course Fat Robins wanted to go in on the game.

He was willing to go for no other purpose than a chance to rob the Chinaman, who had cleaned him out at the poker game.

The three villains remained in the bushes for over half an hour, plotting and talking of what they intended to do.

Though both Bad Jud and Fat Robins declared that they had heard nothing of the murder that had been committed by Ike Bones and his pard, this was no reason that it had not been heard by others; and he knew it would not be safe to show himself among the miners.

It was decided that he would remain in the woods half a mile back of the camp, and as he had already been supplied with a stock of provisions by Jud, he declared that he could make out all right, if he only had some whisky and tobacco.

This was easily got, and a few minutes later he mounted his horse and rode off to the place he intended to hide.

The other two villains were to find out when the prospector was to set out, and then let him know.

Then the three would take the trail.

Knowing that Young Wild West and his friends were going after him, they could keep out of sight of them, and when the right time came around they might be able to rob them and put the dashing young deadshot out of the way at the same time.

That is the way they had it figured out, and now it remained to see how near they would come to doing it.

There was one thing pretty certain, and that was if Young Wild West was not shot they could hardly expect to get possession of the gold Kent Springer was searching for, and the more they thought of it the more convinced were they that not only the boy must be slain, but his two partners, as well. In such an event their girls, if they went with them, would fall in their hands, which they thought would be just about the right thing.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HOP FINDS OUT SOMETHING.

Young Wild West did not think it right that Hop should keep the money he had won from Fat Robins, especially as he knew it had been won through cheating.

"Hop," said he, "you should give that galoot back some of that money. You dealt yourself four aces, and him four kings, just on purpose to beat him."

"Lat light, Misler Wild," the Chinaman answered. "He allee samee cheatee, too, so be. He deal um other hand and he allee samee takee um fivee cards flom um bottom of um pack; me watchee and see, so be."

"No wonder he cleaned us out that hand, then," spoke up The Quail. "Bnt I knowed all ther time that Fat Robins was one what can't play a square game. Everyone here knows that, too. He's been ag'in most every man



in ther camp, an' he has always cheated 'em. No one ain't never said much about it, 'cause they didn't want ter git his pard, Bad Jud, after 'em. I'm awful glad ther heathen got their best of Fat. It's ther first time it's happened since I've knowed him."

"How muchee you lose?" Hop asked.

"I reckon about a hundred an' seventy dollars," was the reply.

"Allee light; me allee samee pay you, so be."

He counted out the money and slipped it to the surprised man.

Then he insisted on giving the other two what they had lost, and they declared that they had never dreamed of such a thing as getting it back, even though they knew, for sure, that Fat Robins had cheated to get it from them.

"I reckon Hop has paid all ther money back that's necessary, Wild," Cheyenne Charlie said, looking at our hero. "If ther measly coyote he cleaned out is anything what they say he is, he ought ter lose his money. If ther heathen was smart enough ter git it, he ought ter be allowed ter keep it. It shows that he's putty honest about it, or he wouldn't give ther others ther money they lost. I'd let Hop keep that pile, if I was you."

It was seldom that the scout offered a suggestion in this way, and our hero decided to let it go that way.

"Well, all right," said he. "I suppose it was a sort of 'dog-eat-dog' game, and the best man should keep his spoils. But I don't believe in gambling, anyhow. I never do it myself unless I've got some other purpose than that of winning money in view. Hop can't very well get on without it, though, and I suppose he will keep at it to the end."

Hop grinned and looked at the ceiling with half closed eyes.

"Me allee samee keepec light on len, if ley lettee me," he declared.

"Ther funniest an' smartest heathen that ever breathed tobacker smoke in a whisky-mill, he is," said The Quail, nodding and slapping his knee to emphasize what he said. "There ain't no rubbin' that out, an' don't furgit it, please!"

"No one ain't likely to furgit it as long as he's around," the scout retorted. "If they did they'd soon git reminded of it, most likely."

Hop liked flattery, though it can be said that it never did him any harm, as might be the case with some.

He seemed to know just what he was capable of, and he never tried to go over the limit.

He now began strutting around the room with the air of a triumphant gamecock.

Suddenly he took a cigar from a pocket, and giving it a quick twist, it turned into a fan.

Using his left hand to fan himself, he placed the right to his mouth, and going through the act of ejecting something from his mouth, he suddenly pulled out a fancy parasol and held it over his head, keeping on strutting about the room meantime.

This made those present open wide their eyes, for even if they all did know that he was a magician, they could not understand how he did such wonderful things.

But if they had known that the parasol was composed principally of a very tough, thin paper, with rods and

handle that would fold like a six-foot rule, and that the cigar was nothing more than the representation of one with the fan inside it, they would not have been so much surprised.

But even then they would have considered it a great performance, no doubt.

Hop did not perform very long.

Suddenly the fan took the shape of a cigar again, and then it was deftly changed for a real cigar, which he coolly lighted and puffed away at.

Then the parasol suddenly collapsed and disappeared, leaving in his hand but a small bunch of paper and wood, which he promptly made out that he ate, going through the act of swallowing, and making a hard face as he did it.

The next thing he did was to excuse himself and head for the bar of the saloon.

Kent Springer now thought it a good time to let the miners in the place know what Ike Bones had done, so he called their attention and began telling them.

There was a deep silence as he proceeded, for they all had known Ike Bones and Jake Platt to be hard customers.

When the prospector had concluded his story The Quail took the floor.

"Boys," said he, removing his hat, "I want ter propose three cheers fur Young Wild West! Now then, everybody! Hip, hip, hip——"

"Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!"

They responded, to a man, and the rafters of the shanty structure fairly trembled.

"That's 'cause Young Wild West shot Jake Platt," explained The Quail, when he was able to make himself heard again. "Now, let's hope that he gits Ike Bones on this trip. Them two galoots never was any good, an' yer all know that."

"Bob is right," spoke up the faro dealer. "I always said it was them what cleaned out two thousand dollars from my old waistcoat that I had hangin' in my room. They was ther only ones what knowed I ever put money in it. They lit out ther same night it happened, an' I ain't ever seen 'em since."

"Well, yer won't never see one of 'em ag'in, that's sartin sure," the scout declared.

"If yer do git ther other galoot jest look on him an' see if yer kin find my money. It was in a buckskin bag, with yaller an' red beads on it. I give a squaw two dollars fur it about a year ago."

"All right. I might git hold of ther bag, if Ike Bones has got it."

"An' say! There was three hundred-dollar bills in ther bag. Ther rest was in gold. One of ther bills had ther edge burned off where I burnt it while winpin' a bet lightin' a cigar with it. You git my money fur me an' I'll let yer keep half fur your trouble, Cheyenne Charlie."

"Good enough! That's worth lookin' fur, I reckon. I'll jest make an examination of ther belongin's of Mister Ike Bones after he gits his medicine. It won't make no difference whether he gits shot, hung or took a prisoner! I'll go through his clothes, you kin bet!"

The faro dealer was greatly pleased, for he thought there was a fair prospect of recovering his money, even though he had no proof that the two villains had taken it.



Our friends remained at the saloon for a little while longer, and then, as everything had settled down to the ordinary, they went over to their camp, leaving Hop somewhere around, they knew not exactly where.

Kent Springer stopped with them, for that had been decided upon already.

"I reckon we'll all stop together to-morrow night, too, Kent," said our hero. "We'll strike out the first thing in the morning for the place we camped at last night. You will go ahead, and we will meet you there. We are going to help you all we can, you know. You've got your grub stake, but that isn't all we are going to do for you. We want to help you get hold of a pile of gold."

"I'm thankful ter hear yer say that, Young Wild West," was the reply. "If I kin only find ther place where ther gold is I'll be ther happiest man this side of Frisco, an' don't make no mistake on it! An' yer kin be sure that you're goin' ter git a big share of ther gold, 'cause if it is found I know there'll be more than I want. I ain't no hog, an' I ain't goin' ter try ter lug away any more than I kin carry, not by a jugful!"

"Wait till the gold is found. Then we'll talk about it."

They all put in a good sleep that night.

As usual our hero and his partners took turns at keeping a watch, but it proved to be unnecessary.

But it made no difference whether they were camped in a mining town or out in the wilderness, the watch was always kept.

There had been times when such an action had stood them well in hand, and there was no telling just when danger might pop up.

Wild was up shortly after it began to grow light in the east.

Cheyenne Charlie had taken the last two hours and a half of the watch, but he had no notion of turning in again.

He set about to stirring things up in the camp, and the first thing he did was to rouse Hop, who he stated had not been in more than two hours.

"You've got ter git up, jest ther same!" cried the scout, as he caught him by the queue and hauled him out of the tent. "I don't care how much tanglefoot yer had in yer when yer went ter sleep; you've got ter git up an' git them pack-horses loaded, jest as if yer was perfectly sober when yer turned in, an' had had eight hours' sleep. You knowed we was goin' ter start out early this mornin'."

"Lat allee light, Misler Charlie," was the reply. "Me no say anyting; you do allee talkee, so be. Takee easy, allee samee."

"What's the matter, Hop?" asked Wild, coming upon them. "Don't feel like getting up, eh?"

"Me feelee allee light, Misler Wild," was the reply, though his appearance belied his words. "Me allee samee findee outee sometling last night, so be."

"Found out something, eh? What was it?"

The young deadshot was interested right away, for he knew that the clever Chinaman had a way of finding out things sometimes.

"When me go to um barloom to gittee lillee dlink of tanglefoot me see two men go outee. Ley takee tobackee and um bottle of tanglefoot with um. Me see lat um big-

gee fat man and um galoot you shootee um guns outee hands, and me allee samee tlinkee sometling long, so me follee."

"Is that so? They were Fat Robins and Bad Jud, then?"

"Yes, lat light, Misler Wild."

"Well, what did you find out by following them?"

"Me listen allee samee when me gitee to um bushee, and me hear um other bad Melican man lere. He allee same um galoot whattee wantee killee Misler Splinger. He 'flaid to show umself, so um fiends gittee whattee he wantee. Len me go to um woods and hide. Ley allee go after Misler Splinger and tly gittee um gold. Ley knowee lat we allee go, too, and ley wantee killee you pletty quickee; killee Misler Charlie and Misler Jim, too, so be. Um biggee fat man say he allee samee lob me, too, allee samee velly muchee quickee."

This was news that was worth having, and Wild questioned him further.

But what the Chinaman stated in his own peculiar way was the gist of it.

"Hop, you're all right," our hero said. "I'll forgive you for staying out so late last night. So there are three villains to contend with, eh? And they want our lives, as well as the gold, do they? Well, I'll bet all I'm worth that they are going to get badly disappointed."

"They'll git worse than that, I reckon," declared the scout, tapping the butt of his revolver in a significant way.

Jim Dart came out a few minutes later, and when he heard what Hop had reported he was not a little surprised.

"But I was pretty sure that the galoot would head for here to get somebody to help him," he said.

"Well, he needs more than them two measly coyotes," declared the scout. "They ain't nothin' ter fight. Why, I'll guarantee that I'll clean all three of 'em out in less than two minutes, if they dare ter face me!"

"But they won't face you, Charlie," Jim answered. "They are not that sort."

The girls soon got up, and then it was not long before Wing had the breakfast ready.

Wild and the prospector went to the store, accompanied by Hop, and the "grub stake" was soon placed on the back of the mule, ready for the start for the mountain-side.

Without taking the trouble to bid anyone good-by, Kent Springer took the back trail.

Then Wild set about to find out what the three villains were up to.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### BACK ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE.

While they had the pack-horses loaded, our friends showed no inclination of leaving the camp.

Wild felt that they might be watched by the villains, who had laid their plans to follow them, and he wanted to throw them off the track, if possible.



Still, he was quite sure, from what Hop had told him, that they knew pretty well what was going on.

The young deadshot took a walk over to the saloon.

He was glad to find that both Bad Jud and Fat Robins were there.

As their horses were not at the front of the place, there was nothing to indicate that they were going to leave very soon.

Our hero could not help saying something to them, for the contempt he had for them was deep and marked.

"You two galoots are up early this morning," he remarked, as he walked in. "I reckon you must have kept awake all night, or you would not be around so soon."

"I generally git up when I feel like it," curtly replied Fat Robins.

"Some of these days you won't get up at all," Wild answered, quickly. "Just remember what I say, will you?"

"I ain't done nothin' ter you, that yer should have a pick on me, Young Wild West," came the reply, while the villain acted as though he felt injured.

"You haven't done anything to me—no! But I reckon you're only waiting for the chance to. Now, let me tell you something, you big galoot! The first time I catch you trying to do anything to me, or to any of my friends, I am going to trim your eyebrows with a bullet. Understand what I say?"

The man made no response, but turning so he faced the man in charge of the bar, he said:

"I'll take a little straight corn-juice, if you've got time ter wait on me."

"Sartin I will," was the reply. "What are you goin' ter have, Jud?"

"I'll take ther same dose," the "Worst Man in the Camp" answered, with an uneasy shrug of the shoulders.

The bartender, who was a little shy of the two men, because they happened to be the only ones in the place, save Young Wild West, hastened to fill the order.

"How do you feel this morning, Bad Jud?" Wild asked, as he looked at the strips of plaster on the bad man's hands. "You are not in the humor for killing a couple of Chinamen, are you?"

"I don't want ter kill nobody," was the response. "Jest because I was drunk yisteday when you folks come here, an' I felt like makin' a little excitement, don't say that I wants ter kill anyone. I wouldn't kill a Chinaman unless I knowed he meant ter kill me if I didn't. I'm all right, Young Wild West, whether you think so or not. I can't make yer believe it, maybe, but that don't say that it ain't so."

"Oh! you are all right! I know you are—in your way of thinking. But you'll find you are all wrong, unless you change your ways mighty quick. By the way, when have you seen Ike Bones last?"

The two men looked at each other, both turning pale.

The question had taken them unawares, and it was certainly a puzzler to them.

"Ike Bones ain't been around here in a week," Fat Robins answered, after he had time to collect himself.

"He ain't been here since he went away with his pard on a prospectin' trip," Bad Jud added.

"And they both left the night they robbed the faro

dealer," Wild contributed, just as though he knew it for a fact.

Again the two men looked at each other.

It happened that Ike Bones had told them that he and his pard had cleaned out the faro dealer, and how Young Wild West had come to know about it they could not imagine.

"Did you know that Ike's pard got shot yesterday?" Wild went on, looking at them in his cool and easy way.

"Yes, we heard that last night," replied the stout villain. "You shot him; they say?"

"Yes, that's right. I shot him without secing him. He fired from a clump of bushes, and I turned and saw the bushes moving and let a shot go. The bullet landed all right, and the result was that Jake Platt shuffled off this mortal coil. You know what that means, of course?"

"I reckon so."

Wild saw that the men were too cowardly for him to get them to show anything like a disposition to put up a fight, and as he did not want to force them to it, and then have to use his revolver on them, he gave it up for the present.

It was a little aggravating to him, too, since he knew that they had plotted to take his life at the first opportunity they got.

He would have been justified in accusing them right then and there, but to shoot them without their putting up a fight he could not do.

That was not the way of the Champion Deadshot of the West.

He did not relish the idea of shooting anyone, anyhow, but there were times when it became absolutely necessary; and in such cases he was always justified, while the world at large was that much the better for it.

Wild purchased some cigars and then left the saloon, returning to the camp.

He quickly told of his meeting with the two villains, and then he proceeded to saddle his horse.

This was the cue for Charlie and Jim to do likewise. Already the girls were ready to mount.

Five minutes later the party left the spot and proceeded leisurely along the trail that had brought them to Roaring Run the day before.

"Now, boys," said our hero to Charlie and Jim, "the two galoots will follow us, that's sure. Just keep an occasional look behind. I have an idea, though, that they will try to get ahead of us, which they can easily do, since they won't take a pack-horse with them. They will figure on getting hold of what we got, and they won't consider that they need to take much with them."

"Well, they won't need much, I reckon," said the scout, laconically. "They won't live long enough fur that."

They rode along until the sun was directly overhead and then they halted for the noonday meal and a rest.

Nothing had been seen of the villains, nor had they managed to overtake the prospector.

But this they were not anxious to do, since they felt that the three men did not mean to interfere with him until he found the place where the gold was.

If they did kill him before that they would not stand much of a chance of finding it.



This was sound logic, even though Ike Bones and his pard had tried to put an end to him the day before.

But this was probably due to the fact that they had become exasperated with him, and had acted in rage.

The girls were just as much interested in the project they had on hand as any of the rest, and they were eager to see the prospector succeed.

They were of the opinion that he would, too, providing the villains let him.

After a rest of about an hour they set out again, and along toward the end of the afternoon they came to the spot where they had left on the morning of the day before.

"I reckon we'll stop right here," said Wild. "We know just what sort of a place this is, and in the morning we can start on the hunt for the spot Springer is so anxious to find."

"That's right, Wild," answered the scout. "But I wonder where Springer is now?"

"Oh! not very far away," was the reply. "Haven't you noticed that the tracks of his horses are mighty fresh-looking?"

"That's right, Wild!" called a voice from the top of the hill. "Here I am. I jest got here a few minutes ago. I climbed a tree an' seen yer comin'. But there's others comin', too. Them three galoots ain't more'n a mile behind yer."

The prospector now came down the hill, leading his horse and mule.

He had not yet unloaded the latter, which showed that he was waiting to go into camp with them.

"I might just as well have waited an' come along with yer," he said. "Ther galoots didn't 'pear ter want ter git between us, did they?"

"No; that's so," Wild retorted. "I was in hopes they would do that, for then we might have had a chance to get at them. If they had shown any inclination to disturb you we would have lit upon them like a catamount on a wounded fawn. But they are going to be mighty careful how they go about their business, I reckon."

Jim Dart had already started up the hill for a tree, and Wild and the rest knew that he meant to have a look around and locate the three villains, providing they were still in sight.

The boy saw them all right, and when he came down the tree he reported that they were less than half a mile away, and at a halt.

"All right," said Wild. "I reckon that's all right. They won't come so very near until after it gets dark, anyhow. They are not the ones to run much risk. They think too much of their lives, I reckon."

All hands now turned in to get the camp in shape.

In a few minutes the pack-horses were unloaded, as well as the mule, and then the work of putting up the tents was quickly attended to.

"Get the supper under way, Wing," said our hero, as the cook started a fire. "I reckon we don't have to hide ourselves from the galoots. They know just where we are, anyhow, so it won't make any difference."

"Allee light, Misler Wild," was the reply.

Then it was not long before they were eating a rather early supper, for the sun was easily an hour high.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE VILLAINS ARE READY FOR BUSINESS.

In spite of what Young Wild West had said to them Fat Robins and Bad Jud were still determined to carry out the plan they had laid out.

They hung around the Red Light Saloon until they saw our friends ride away, and then they left the resort and went and got their horses.

They might just as well have told the man in charge that they were after Young Wild West, for he had seen and heard enough to know it.

But it was none of his business, he argued to himself, and he let the matter go.

Meanwhile the two villains headed for the spot where they were to meet Ike Bones.

They found him waiting for them, and the delight he showed at hearing that the prospector had already started was genuine, since he did not like the idea of remaining there very long.

"If they had put it off till to-morrer it would have been mighty tiresome fur me," he said, as he hastened to get his horse ready to mount. "I was afraid they would rest a day afore startin' out. So Young Wild West an' his gang went along with him, did they?"

"No; they waited until he got a good start afore they left," answered Robins.

"Is that so? Why didn't yer come right along, then, so we could have got ahead of 'em?"

"That's jest what they wanted us ter do, that's ther reason we didn't," spoke up Bad Jud. "They knew putty well that we're goin' ter try an' git ther gold, an' they seem ter know that we're in ther game with you, too. Why, Young Wild West even knows that you an' Jake Platt robbed ther faro dealer at ther Red Light."

"How did he find that out, I wonder?" asked the man, who dared not show his face in Roaring Run.

"I don't know how he comes ter know it, but he seems ter know, jest ther same. But never mind! What's ther odds if he does know? That won't stop us from carryin' out our scheme. We ain't goin' ter do it in ther open; we've got ter work on ther sly. We've got ter act about ther same way as sneak thieves acts in their cities. I know somethin' about that business. I reckon I put a little time in at it afore I got ter knockin' around minin' camps. I'm an old hand, I am."

Robins spoke with a great degree of pride, and when his companions looked at him admiringly he felt that he had made enough impression upon them to be accepted as the leader and adviser in the game they meant to carry through.

"I reckon you know a lot more than a good many does, Fat," Ike said, shaking his head. "You jest figure this thing out, will yer? I'm putty sartin that ther gold will be found, an' I've been thinkin' that ther best way is ter let Springer find it fur us. What do you think?"

"That's ther only way, of course," was the reply. "Let him find it, an' then we'll jest pop him over an' take possession. That'll be mighty easy, if we kin only fix Young Wild West an' his pards afore it happens."



"Yes, that's where ther trouble comes in."

"It hadn't ought ter be so very much trouble," spoke up Bad Jud, who decided to make a bid for the leadership. "Jest leave that part of it ter me, will yer?"

"All right, then. You kin figure out how we're goin' ter git rid of Young Wild West an' his pards, an' Fat kin work on ther rest of ther case. I'm willin' ter do jest as either of yer say."

"Yes: but ther ought ter be one of us ter be ther head of this thing," said Fat. "Nothin' ever seems ter go right where there ain't any leader. I've seen lots of that kind of work in my day, an' it was always hard luck where everyone had as much ter say as everyone else. I ain't sayin' that I'm ther one as ought ter be leader, but I do think we ought ter have one, even if there is only three of us."

"Well, you be leader, then, Fat. I'm satisfied ter that, an' I reckon Jud is."

"Oh! I'm satisfied ter anything," Bad Jud answered; but his tone of voice implied that he was not.

However, Fat accepted what he said as being meant and he at once assumed the leadership.

"Come on," he said. "We'll foller Young Wild West's party at a safe distance behind 'em, an' when they go inter camp we'll jest take a good look at ther spot. I want ter clean that heathen out of ther pile of money he's got afore he's many hours older. I'm goin' ter git that money, if I have ter stick a knife between his ribs ter quiet him, so I kin git it. That's business, boys. That heathen galoot has got a good deal more money than ther average white man would care ter have all at one time. Some of it's mine, too, an' that makes me all ther more anxious ter git hold of it. If I do git it I'll take out what he skinned me out of last night, an' then I'll divide ther rest even with you two. That's a mighty fair proposition, ain't it?"

They both declared that it was.

But neither of them had the least idea as to how they were going to go at it in order to rob the Chinaman, any more than they had as to how they were going to kill our hero and his partners.

They kept to the trail all day, and finally when our friends went into camp they halted not more than half a mile from the spot, as has been stated.

On the information he received from Ike, Fat figured that they would camp upon the same spot they had occupied two nights before, and as they were getting close to it, they must be cautious about proceeding.

"Now's ther time when we've got ter git in our fine work, boys," the leader remarked, as he scratched his head and tried to think of a plan that would work.

"There ain't no mistake about that," Ike replied. "I s'pose ther best thing ter do would be ter git around 'em, up on ther hill. Then we'd have a chance ter watch 'em putty bad."

"That's jest what we'll do," said Fat, accepting the suggestion readily. "Come on, boys. But be mighty careful that they don't see us. We don't want ter go close enough to ther camp fur that, Ike. You know jest where it is, an' we don't. Keep a sharp watch, Ike."

"Oh! I'll git around without bein' seen, I reckon," Ike

answered. "That'll be mighty easy. We'll jest ride off to ther left an' go around that patch of woods."

This they proceeded to do, and in a little while they had reached the hill that overlooked the spot where our friends were camped.

"Now then," observed Fat, as he peered through the bushes and saw our friends, "after it gits dark I'll show yer what kind of a sneak thief I am. I am goin' ter git that money away from ther heathen, as sure as I'm alive!"

## CHAPTER X.

### FAT MAKES A MISS OF IT.

As soon as it got good and dark Young Wild West left the camp to find out where the three villains had located.

That they were somewhere very close by he was sure; but he wanted to know just where, and find out what they were up to.

Wild crept up the hill in a very cautious manner, for he did not underestimate the watchfulness of the men.

As he got to the top he suddenly became aware of the fact that he was very near to someone.

A slight rustling in the bushes told him this; but when he heard the sounds of breathing he was certain of it.

"One of them has started down to spy on our camp, most likely," he thought. "Well, I'll let him go past me, and then I'll just follow him."

Having decided upon this, the boy remained perfectly still.

Past him crept a human being, going with remarkable stealth, and showing that it was not a novice at the game.

Dark as it was, Wild could see that it was a man who had passed him.

But this was to be expected, as a wild animal would not act in that manner.

Down the hill the fellow went, and right after him came Young Wild West.

The embers of the campfire had died out, but there was a lighted lantern there, and it was toward this that the villain was creeping.

The lantern sat on a natural shelf of rock, and though it made a light that could be seen, it could not be seen itself.

Wild was a little surprised when he saw that the villain was venturing close to the camp.

He got closer to him, for it now seemed as though he was going right into it!

"I reckon the galoot is bent on murder," thought the boy. "I'll have to watch him. The boys won't be expecting any such a visit as that, with me away on a tour of inspection."

The young deadshot moved rapidly now, and soon he was within half a dozen feet of the man, who had paused now and seemed undecided just what to do.

With the light that shone from the lantern for a background Wild was able to see the villain pretty well now, and though he was crouching pretty low to the ground, he saw that it was the man called Fat Robins.

"You're doing mighty well for a big, heavy man," our



hero muttered, under his breath. "But I am afraid you are not going to accomplish what you want to do. It's a safe bet that you're after the money Hop has got. But I reckon you won't get it, not this trip, anyhow."

The villain now pulled a knife from his belt, and having decided what to do, started around to the left of the camp.

Wild went right along after him, not making a particle of noise, which was not exactly the case with the man, for every few seconds he would make a twig crack, while his heavy breathing could be heard.

Behind the tents was an almost perpendicular cliff, and as he reached the foot of this Fat Robins crept along, as though he wanted to get directly behind them.

There was room enough to do this, of course, but he was taking quite a risk if he tried it, for the girls were seated close to the tent they used for sleeping purposes, and they might hear the least sound that he made.

Wild figured this out, but it is doubtful if the villain did.

Most likely he depended on his stealth to carry him through without being discovered.

Our hero waited until he got behind the tents, and then he gave the hoot of an owl twice in succession.

This was the signal our friends usually used nights, and the moment he heard it Cheyenne Charlie gave an answer.

Then Wild stepped softly into the camp.

"There's a galoot behind the tents," he whispered in the ear of the scout. "Get to that side—quick!"

Charlie needed no further telling what to do.

He walked around to the place he was told to, revolver in hand.

Then Wild went the same way Fat Robins had gone.

The villain was in the act of cutting his way into the biggest of the tents when Charlie pounced upon him.

"I reckon you've sorter got a nerve," said the scout, as he held him by the throat with his left hand and pressed the revolver he held in the right against the villain's forehead. "What do yer think we are, anyhow?"

"Don't! Do-n-n-n't!" gurgled the scoundrel, for his breath was being cut short by the powerful grip the scout had upon his throat. "Mercy!"

"Fetch him around, Charlie," said Wild, just then. "I reckon he wants to have a look at our camp, so we'll let him have a good look at it. Jim, just fetch a light, will you?"

Dart was not long in fetching the lantern.

Then Fat was forced to rise to his feet, and the scout quickly relieved him of his weapons.

"You're sartinly a very slick man, fur a big one, ain't yer?" he asked, as he looked at the face of the discomfited villain and grinned. "I s'pose yer was goin' ter cut your way inter ther tent, so yer could sleep there, wasn't yer?"

Fat made no reply, but went along with his captor without hesitation.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Anna, when she saw the prisoner. "A sneak thief, eh?"

"Velly muchee sneakee," Hop spoke up. "He allee samee play velly nicee gamee dlaw pokee, so be. Fat um velly gloat Melican man."

The captured villain scowled as he looked at the smiling Chinaman.

"I reckon I ain't afraid of any of yer," he declared, trying to act indifferently. "Yer can't more than kill me, an' that's bound ter happen ter me some time. I might jest as well go now as any other time, I s'pose."

"You are becoming quite a philosopher, I reckon," said Wild. "But before you die you can tell us what you came here for."

"Am I goin' ter die soon?"

The man's face turned the color of ashes now.

"You are liable to die at any moment. See! The Chinaman has got you covered with a gun that is big enough to bore a hole through a tree. If he should happen to press the trigger you would die. You can see how close to death you are."

Hop had drawn his big six-shooter, and he was pointing it directly at the scoundrel's breast.

"Don't shoot!" he cried. "I ain't done nothin', any more than ter sneak up to your camp. What I was goin' ter do an' what I didn't do is two different things."

"That's right, sure enough," Jim Dart spoke up. "What made you think of saying that, you big galoot?"

"Well, it's right, jest ther same. Yer ain't got no right ter kill a man jest because he was goin' ter do somethin' bad. He ain't guilty till he does it, an' yer can't make it any other way."

Wild was compelled to laugh at the way the villain argued.

But he was certainly putting up a strong argument.

However, no one had the least idea of shooting him just then.

He was but a helpless prisoner in their hands, and they did not intend to appoint themselves his executioner.

But Charlie felt that the man ought to die, so looking at him keenly, he said:

"I'll tell yer what I'll do, Fat Robins; I'll fight yer with huntin' knives. That'll give yer a good show fur your life. If you happen ter down me I'll guarantee that Wild won't stop yer from leavin' ther camp. But if I down you, you'll jest die while fightin' fur your life, which is a great deal better than gittin' hung to ther limb of a tree, I reckon."

"I ain't goin' ter fight nobody," declared Fat, shaking his head. "If yer kill me you've got ter do it in cold blood, that's all. I don't want ter fight fur my life—I ain't goin' ter fight fur my life!"

"You're about as big a coward as I have seen in a long time," our hero said, looking at the big scoundrel in disgust. "Most any kind of a man will accept the chance to fight for his life when he finds himself in the power of his enemies. But you haven't got enough sand in you for that."

"I know I ain't," was the admission. "But I can't help it, kin I?"

"If you can't, I don't know who can. But I want you to tell me what you came here for. Go ahead, and see to it that you don't do any lying about it!"

"Well, I come here ter try an' git ther money ther Chinees has got."

"Was that all you came for?"



"Yes. That was enough, wasn't it? He's got a mighty big pile. I reckon, an' some of it belongs ter me, anyhow."

"Well, I am pretty certain that you'll never get hold of that pile, Fat. You can try it again, if you feel so disposed; but if you do you want to look out for yourself! You'll die the next time you try it!"

"I ain't goin' ter try it no more. If you let me go I'll strike out right away fur Roarin' Run. I won't bother yer no further."

"I don't believe a word of what you say, Fat. But I am going to let you go, nevertheless. We don't want to be bothered with a prisoner, especially a big galoot, like you! Now, just move away from here! Go and tell Bad Jud and Ike Bones how near you came to losing your life."

"Aren't yer goin' ter give me back my gun an' knife?" asked the man, boldly.

"No! Certainly not. I reckon you've got enough weapons among the three of you. Just run up that hill now! Go on!"

Fat did not wait to be told again.

He got a lively move on him for a stout man, and soon he vanished in the darkness.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ARIETTA FIRES A SHOT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE VILLAINS.

"Keep a sharp watch, boys," said Wild. "I am going to follow the galoot and hear what he tells his companions."

"Right yer are, Wild," replied the scout.

The dashing young deadshot lost no time in getting away from the camp again.

He knew that none of the villains would succeed in getting there now, for Charlie and Jim were on the watch.

He went on up the hill as stealthily as he had done before.

Creeping through the bushes, he soon heard the sounds of low voices.

Wild had located them now.

The spot where they were was not more than three hundred yards from the camp.

He made his way straight to it and found them in a clump of woods.

They were gathered close together, and had a dark lantern on the ground before them.

Fat Robins was telling of his experience.

As he went over it in detail Young Wild West could not help smiling, for he was embellishing it with an account of how bold he had been, and how hard they had to fight to overcome him.

"Yes, boys, that's right," he went on to say. "I reckon they found they had ketched someone what wasn't afraid of nothin'. Of course I had ter give in when ther big galoot called Cheyenne Charlie pushed ther muzzle of his gun right in my mouth. There wasn't no use in makin' a fuss that might set ther gun off. I didn't want ter die, y' know."

"What did they say, anyhow?" Ike Bones asked.

"Well, they wanted ter know all about everything. They asked me what I come to ther camp fur, an' I up an' told 'em that I had come there fur two things. One was ter rob ther heathen Chinees, an' ther other was ter kill Young Wild West an' his pards an' take charge of ther gals. We meant ter turn Springer loose, I told 'em, so he could go an' find ther gold fur us. Oh! I give it ter 'em straight, 'cause I knowed there wasn't any use of showin' ther white feather. There's nothin' like puttin' on a bold front, yer know."

Wild could hardly stand this, so he crept up close to the three men, and then rising within half a dozen feet of them, exclaimed:

"You lie, you big galoot! You acted like the biggest coward I ever saw when we caught you."

If someone had exploded a bomb right in their midst the three scoundrels could not have been more astounded.

Wild stood there, fully outlined before the black background of the forest, his revolver toying loosely in his hand.

Fat was the first to realize the position they were in and up went his hands.

Then his companions followed suit.

"You are a fine trio, I must say," said Wild, coolly. "Fat, you never told a bigger lie in your life when you just related how brave you was when we caught you a little while ago. Why, you acted the part of a genuine coward. You would not even agree to fight Cheyenne Charlie with knives, and thus run a chance of getting your liberty. You haven't enough courage in you to take hold of a dead rat!"

There was a silence, for neither of them saw fit to make an answer.

"If I did the right thing I would shoot you all as you sit there," went on the boy. "I know what you would do to us if you got the chance, and that makes you guilty. But I am not going to shoot you. I am going to let you be just as you are. You will have the chance to get away and quit the game, or keep on, just as you like. But if you do keep on, you can bet all you're worth that you'll never live to see a mining camp again. I'll bid you good night!"

With that Wild stepped back among the trees and disappeared.

He watched the villains as he left the spot, but neither of them attempted to rise as long as he could see them.

When he got back to the camp he quickly told his companions what had occurred, and they all thought he had done about the right thing, save Charlie.

He thought the three men should have been captured and taken back to the mining camp, or else hanged right there.

The latter would have been about the best way to settle it, he declared.

But that was Charlie's way.

He had lived a life in the wildest parts of the West, and he had seen so much in the way of crime and the summary punishment thereof that he could not be made to believe that it was best to let a villain live so long as he failed to harm anyone.

The night passed quietly enough.

Wild was quite sure it would be this way, as far as the



three men were concerned, for Fat was not likely to creep up to the camp very soon again.

As the sun showed itself above the mountain range to the east Wing had the fire started and the coffee on.

Wild knew that the villains would be none too good to take a shot if they got the chance, so he decided to go and look them up while the breakfast was getting ready.

"May I go with you, Wild?" Arietta asked. "Perhaps we might run across something in the line of game."

"All right, Et," was the reply. "Come on."

Both took their rifles with them, but did not go directly toward the spot where our hero had left the three men the night before.

They moved around to the right, intending to come upon them from the other way.

No game was started for the period of ten minutes, and by this time they were around and approaching close to the spot where the camp had been.

The next minute Wild made the discovery that the three men had left the vicinity.

He stepped to the spot, Arietta following him, and they found that there was a trail leading off to the left.

"I reckon we'll follow the trail a short distance, Et," said the boy, nodding to his sweetheart. "I don't believe they are very far away."

"It is hardly likely that they are, Wild, unless they have given up their scheme," was the reply.

The two followed the trail swiftly, but stepping softly, so as to not let their presence be known in case they came upon them suddenly.

In this way nearly a quarter of a mile was covered.

Then they came upon an open spot, with a high precipice to the right.

Straight before them was the mouth of a deep gorge which ran on through toward the high ridge of rocks and peaks miles away.

The gorge no doubt ran well to the heart of the range. Wild and Arietta paused here and took in the scene.

As their gaze swept about they suddenly saw smoke curling upward from behind a rocky projection something like a hundred yards away.

"There they are," said our hero. "I reckon we'll have a look at them, Et."

"All right," answered the girl, and then they started to climb to the top of the cliff.

Reaching it, they found they had the view they wanted.

Below them, on a wide ledge, were the three villains.

They were cooking their breakfast, and their horses were tied close at hand.

"They don't mean to give it up, I reckon," said our hero, nodding to his sweetheart. "They are right before a cave, Et. Most likely they intend to make it their quarters until they have either accomplished their purpose or passed in their chips."

"Yes, Wild, I see the cave," was the reply. "I suppose they must have slept in it."

"Quite likely. They evidently left the other place as soon as I came away last night. They felt that it was a little too near us, maybe."

The boy laughed as he thought of the fear the three men had shown when he confronted them so suddenly.

Just as they were turning from the spot to go back to

the camp Arietta caught sight of a mountain buck standing upon a crag, almost directly above the spot where the villains were camped.

The animal could not see them, nor could he see the boy and girl.

"See that goat, Wild?" Arietta asked, as she raised her rifle.

"Yes, I see him," was the reply. "But you won't be able to get him if you shoot him."

"Well, that is all right. If I shoot it the carcass will drop almost on top of the villains. I think I will give them a surprise in the way of some fresh meat."

Wild nodded for her to go ahead, so she drew a bead on the goat.

Crang!

The sharp report rang out with startling distinctness.

The animal at the top of the crag gave a leap and then went whirling down directly toward the three men.

The carcass struck the ledge within a few feet of them, and with cries of dismay, they turned and fled into the cave.

"You are very kind, Et, to furnish them with all that fresh meat," said our hero, with a laugh. "But come on; we'll get back to the camp. I am getting a bit hungry."

They left the spot without waiting another minute, and soon they reached the camp.

"What's ther game?" the scout asked, when he saw they had brought nothing with them.

"We left it for Ike Bones and his pards," Wild answered.

Then he told what had happened and all hands smiled.

"They won't appreciate it as much as if one of them had shot it, I fear," said Anna. "It may be that they will be afraid to touch the goat."

"Well, it gave them a fright, anyhow," Arietta answered. "That is all I shot it for."

## CHAPTER XII.

### FAT ROBINS' GOOD LUCK(?).

Breakfast being eaten, our friends got ready to make the search for the spot Kent Springer was so anxious to find.

"If you only had some idea of where it is," said Wild, as they were ready to move, "we ought to soon find it."

"Well, 'cordin' ter what ther dyin' man said, it can't be no more'n a mile from this very spot, at ther most," was the reply. "It ain't over a mile from here where he fell, an' he p'inted off this way an' said ther claim he had found was within ten minutes of us. Whether he meant by horse or on foot, I don't know. That's what's been puzzlin' me. He said I know ther place 'cause there was a deep gorge right nigh to it. Ther spot was right between two or three little hills, he said."

"If that is the case, I think we were right there a little while ago, Wild," spoke up Arietta. "We crossed just such a place as that when we climbed up to get a look at the camp of the villains."

"That's right," our hero answered, with an approving



not. "The gorge is right there, too. But if there is where the gold is the three villains are pretty close to it, without knowing it."

"You seen ther place, then?" asked the prospector, eagerly.

"We were right at just such a place as you describe, Kent."

"Well, that's it, then. It's funny I couldn't find it afore. But I s'pose it was 'cause I had ter be on ther watch fur Ike Bones an' Jake Platt all ther time. Let's git over there, Wild. I reckon you've got them galoots so scared of yer that they won't do nothin' now. They will most likely want ter git further away when they see us comin'."

"They have got a cave to protect them from us, you know," spoke up Arietta. "If they have any sand in them at all they could hold it against us for a long time. Don't think that they have given it up, for they haven't. They would have gone further than that if they had decided to let it drop. I feel quite sure that they are just as anxious to kill you, and get the gold as they ever were."

"That's right, Et. You have got that just right. The galoots are rank cowards, all right; but they are not the sort to give up a game, so long as they can keep from getting hurt. I suppose the more they find that we don't mean to shoot them unless they make a fight, the more they think they will be able to accomplish their purpose. But never mind what they think! We will go over there, and if it strikes us as being the right sort we'll shift our camp there. Then you can go ahead with your prospecting, Kent."

"All right," was the reply. "We won't shift ther camp till we make sure that it is the right place. I kin tell ther minute I see it."

The girls wanted to go along with them, so Wild decided to leave the camp in charge of Hop and Wing while they made an examination of the place.

He hardly thought that the three villains would attempt to visit the camp while they were away.

So all but Hop and Wing set out on foot for the spot Wild and Arietta had visited before breakfast.

They took their rifles with them, of course, for they did not know at what moment they might have use for them.

Wing set about to clean up things, while Hop turned his attention to his saddle-bags.

It was here that he usually kept the bulk of his money, and as he still had the big amount he had shown at the Red Light Saloon on his person, he thought he had better put it away.

The clever Chinaman soon did this, and the secret pocket he had made in the saddle-bags was certainly an admirable hiding place for it.

Among the things he had was a big roll of counterfeit bills.

Hop sometimes worked one of these on the unsuspecting, but just for a joke, he always making it good before quitting.

There was that honesty about him that he never cheated anyone unless he knew positively that they were trying to cheat him.

After putting his money away he got hold of the roll

of counterfeit bills, and sitting by the expiring fire, he proceeded to count it.

"You allee samee velly muchee fool, my blother," remarked Wing, as he saw what he was doing. "Maybe some bad Melican man see you countee um money; len he come and allee samee lob you."

"Lat allee light," Hop retorted, touching the butt of his big pistol, significantly. "Me no 'flaid. Me shootee um bad Melican man allee samee pletty quicke, so be. Me shootee allee samee likee Young Wild West!"

The cook sniffed the air in a contemptuous way, for he knew his brother could hardly hit the broadside of a shanty at fifty yards.

He did not know that it was counterfeit money his brother was counting, either.

If he had he would hardly have paid any attention to what he was doing.

Hop kept on counting the bills over and over, calling out the amount every time he finished.

According to what he said he had over five thousand dollars.

This was a great deal more than Wing had ever possessed at one time, or ever expected to possess, but he did not seem to care.

So long as he got all he wanted to eat, and had plenty of sleep, he was satisfied.

Ten minutes slipped by and Hop was still counting the spurious money.

Suddenly there came an interruption.

It was in the form of a man, who stepped from behind a rock, a revolver in his hand,

It was no other than Fat Robins.

"Hold up your hands!" he commanded, putting on a very fierce aspect. "If either of you two galoots lets out a yell I'll kill yer as dead as a mackerel!"

"Whattée mattee?" cried the astonished pair, speaking as though in one voice.

"I'll take charge of that roll, Mister Hop," said the villain, stepping up. "That's jest what I come here after. 'Ther minute I seen ther rest of ther party leave ther camp I thought about that pile of yourn, an' I come right after it. I'm mighty glad you had it all ready fur me. Oh! I was on ther watch ter see what was goin' on here; yer kin bet your boots on that!"

"You allee samee velly bad Melican man, Misler Fat," said Hop, shaking his head.

"I know it, an' I'm mighty proud of it," was the grinning reply. "Jest hand over that roll."

"Allee light; you takee; but me allee samee gittee back, so be."

"Yer will, eh? Well, that's only maybe so. My! So there's over five thousand in ther pile, eh? Well, well, well! I reckon my luck has took a turn."

He took the roll, and without so much as making an examination of it, thrust it in one of his pockets.

Then he nodded approvingly and observed:

"I reckon I won't kill you two galoots now. You've done so well by me that I'll let yer live. I'm satisfied with this roll. I don't care if I don't git nothin' else now; or whether Young Wild West an' his pards lives or dies. Yer kin bet your boots that Jud an' Ike don't git



no share of this! They didn't have spunk enough ter come with me, so they kin go without. Ha, ha, ha!"

The villain laughed, still keeping his revolver turned toward the two Chinamen, who continued to hold up their hands.

Of the two, Wing was the only one frightened.

Hop felt like laughing, more than anyone else, for he was thinking of how he had fooled the villain with the counterfeit money.

Then he had heard our hero and his partners talk so much about the cowardice of the three villains—he had seen some of it himself, in fact—and this all went to make him feel quite easy.

But if Fat had declared that he was going to kill them it would have been different, of course.

But Fat was too much pleased at the big pile he had come in possession of to feel like committing murder just then.

One thing about him was that he had never yet done as bad as that, and with over five thousand dollars in his possession, he could not see the necessity of doing it now.

"I'll bid you two heathen galoots good mornin'," he said, as he turned to go. "Don't yer move from where yer are till five minutes has passed. Understand?"

Then the big villain disappeared around the rock and hurried away.

He had scarcely gone than Hop dropped his hands and then crept up close to Wing.

"Evelytling allee light, my blother," he whispered. "Lat allee samee bad money he takee; me no foolee! Now me foolee um bad Melican man and allee samee findee outee sometling, so be."

"You go 'way, so be?" faltered the cook, hardly able to believe the evidence of his own ears.

"Yes, me go 'way; you allee samee stay. Bad Melican man no comee back; he hully up to gittee 'way."

"Allee light, my blother."

Hop was soon on the trail of Fat Robins.

He had put in a good deal of that kind of work since he had been with Young Wild West, so it was not difficult for him to follow the man.

In a few minutes he saw him ascending the slope that would lead to the ledge he had heard Wild and Arietta speaking of.

Of course Fat had taken a roundabout course, for he did not want to come in contact with our friends.

It took him fully ten minutes to get close to the cave he and his pards had decided to make their quarters at.

But before going to them he looked around for a convenient place to hide the big roll, for he thought it possible that they might notice his bulging pocket, and make inquiries concerning it.

He hid the roll in a niche in the cliff, and then he put a stone over it to conceal it, and mark the spot at the same time.

And clever Hop Wah saw just where he put it!

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### HOP HAS SOME FUN WITH THE VILLAINS.

When Fat Robins joined his waiting companions a couple of minutes later he shook his head in answer to their looks of inquiry.

"I wouldn't risk goin' inter ther camp," he said. "Them two Chinamen sat there on ther watch, an' each with a big gun in his hand. I wouldn't fool with 'em, 'cause I know that one of 'em kin do things that no one else kin do, an' you fellers know that, too."

"I don't know nothin' about him much; but from what I've heard you an' Jud say, he must be a putty smart galoot," Ike Bones answered.

It was evident that neither of them were surprised, for, in spite of the boasts Fat had made before setting out, they knew about how far he would reach.

But Bad Jud, who had not felt good over the selection of Fat for the leader, was determined to make him look small.

"I reckon I could have done better myself," he said, after a pause. "Fat, I begin ter think that you ain't got no sand in yer."

"I've got as much as you have, even if yer did have ther name of ther 'Worst Man in ther Camp,'" was the fiery retort.

"Oh! I don't know. If yer think that way s'pose we have it out? We've always been putty good friends, but that don't make no difference. I'm satisfied that you ain't no man fur a leader, anyhow. You're a rank, no-good coward!"

This came like a shot upon the ears of Fat.

He reached for his gun in a jiffy, but finding that Bad Jud already had him covered, he changed his mind.

It was then that Ike interfered.

"Boy, you're makin' fools of yourselves," he said, shaking his head. "Don't yer know that we won't stand no show ter git that gold, if yer go ter actin' this way? We've got ter work together if we're goin' ter do any-thing. Yer both ought ter know that. Why, Young Wild West an' ther rest of 'em is down there now—only a little ways below us—an', by ther way they're actin', they've about found ther place Kent Springer has been lookin' fur so long. Have a little reason about yer, won't yer? Shake hands, boys! Go on, an' shake!"

The two men looked at each other in silence for the space of two or three seconds, and then Fat blurted out:

"I'll shake with him. I ain't got nothin' ag'in my old pard, Jud."

"An' I ain't got nothin' ag'in you, nuther," retorted Bad Jud. "Shake, Fat!"

The two shook hands.

Ike smiled complacently, for he felt that he had won a great victory.

"I'm mighty glad, boys," he said, nodding his approval. "Now then, let's see what Young Wild West is up ter."

He started up the rocks, so he might get to a spot from which he could look down upon our friends, who were about a couple of hundred yards to the left, and in the spot that Wild and Arietta had decided must be the one the prospector was looking for.

Ike had not ascended more than a few feet when a big spider dropped right before his face.

It was such a big one that he let out a cry of fear and went rolling down upon the ledge.

If the villain had been listening he would have heard a low chuckle of delight, for it was Hop who had let the spider dangle in his face.



Of course it was not a real spider, for the clever Chinaman had a very big representation of one, and attached to a thread, he could effect a surprise about any time he felt like it.

So little did Hop fear the three men now that he had resorted to the temptation of playing a trick on them.

After removing the roll of counterfeit money from the niche, and placing an empty whisky flask there in its stead, he had climbed up above the ledge, and while Fat and Jud were quarreling he was watching and listening but a dozen feet above them.

When he saw Ike starting to come up he knew he would have to move, or else make him go back, so he thought of the spider and promptly got it out of his pocket.

The effect was all that he could wish for just then.

"What's ther matter with yer?" asked Bad Jud, as he helped Ike upon his feet. "What did yer see that scared yer so?"

"Ther biggest spider I ever seen dropped down right by my nose when I was goin' up there," Ike answered, shaking his head, and rubbing his nose, as though he was not sure but that it had not been bitten. "Thunder! I didn't want ter git stung, did I?"

"Pshaw! What's ther use of bein' scared by a spider? It wasn't no tarantula, was it?"

"I don't know what it was, nor I don't want ter know," was the reply.

"Well, I ain't afraid ter go up. Jest watch me! I'll bet I won't come down like you did."

Jud took a look at the rocks above him, and seeing nothing that looked like a spider, he started to go up.

He got just about as far as Ike had gone when a sharp hiss sounded and then a snake suddenly wound itself about his neck!

Jud let out a yell that could easily have been heard half a mile, and then down he came in a heap!

The snake was gone, too; and no one had seen it save himself.

But there was nothing surprising about this, since Hop had worked the trick by using the rubber imitation of a rattler he had with him.

It was great fun for the Chinaman, and he could hardly keep from laughing loudly.

"What in thunder is ther matter?" roared Fat Robins, as Jud got up.

"A snake! Didn't yer see it jump on me an' wind around my neck?" was the reply, while he brushed at his neck and looked around wildly.

"I reckon you're dreamin'," was the retort. "First Ike sees a spider, an' then you sees a snake. I reckon you've both been drinkin' too hard lately."

Then the two victims of the Chinaman began talking at the same time, both declaring that there was no mistake about it.

"Well, ther only way ter prove that you two galoots is goin' crazy is fur me ter go up there. I'll bet nothin' don't bother me!"

Bad Jud started boldly upward.

But the next moment both the spider and snake dangled in his very face.

"Wow!" he yelled, and then down he came.

"I seen 'em both!" he cried. "You fellers didn't lie,

after all. What kind of a nest have we struck around here, anyhow?"

If Hop had let it go at that it would have been all right.

But the fun-loving Chinaman was not satisfied.

Taking a big firecracker from his pocket, he struck a sulphur match softly and lighted the fuse.

When it was about ready to explode he let it drop.

Bang!

The cracker exploded with a loud noise almost in the faces of the three villains.

They fell over backward, yelling in dismay, and thinking it time to leave, Hop beat a hasty retreat.

It was fully two minutes before the men recovered from their fright.

But the exploding firecracker had made them understand pretty well that human hands had been responsible for what had happened to them.

"I reckon that Chinees must have been up there havin' fun with us," observed Ike, who seemed to possess better thinking powers just then. "I heard yer say that he could make a fool out of a galoot so easy. It's been him, an' he sartinly did make fools out of us three."

"It might have been him," Fat admitted, looking at Jud.

"That's right," replied the "bad man."

"If it was, he had a putty good nerve ter climb up there so close to us," Ike ventured. "I wonder if he's there yet? If he is there'll be a dead heathen here putty quick!"

Revolver in hand he started up the ascent again.

This time nothing disturbed him.

He went on until he got among the rocks at the top.

There was no one there. Hop had made good his escape, though he had spoiled the joke part of it.

Ike cast a glance down the hill.

He saw the Chinaman hurrying toward Young Wild West, who was evidently waiting for him, probably a hundred yards away from the top of the rocky pile.

Ike shifted his position a little, and then reaching out with his revolver, he took aim at the Chinaman.

Crang!

The sharp report of a Winchester rang out before he could press the trigger, and with a howl of pain, he dropped the revolver and hurriedly started to get back to the ledge.

His wrist was bleeding, for the rifle bullet had cut a furrow across the back of it.

"What's ther matter?" cried his pards, showing great alarm.

"I'm shot!" came from Ike, as he rolled on the ground, as though suffering the greatest of agony.

"Who done it?" queried Fat, his face as pale as a sheet.

"Young Wild West done it. I was jest goin' ter take a shot at ther Chinaman when he let me have it with his rifle. Oh! I'll never be able ter use my right arm ag'in as long as I live."

"Git in ther cave—quick!" exclaimed Jud. "They'll be here after us, most likely."

He dragged Ike in, and Fat followed in a hurry.

But no one came to interfere with them, and after a while they grew a little easier.



Ike's wound was found to be nothing but a flesh one, and after it was attended to he felt better. But the most worried one of the three was Fat, for he felt that something might have happened to his hidden roll.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### HOW FAT FAILED.

Our friends had no sooner reached the spot they thought might be the one the prospector was looking for when Kent Springer gave a cry of joy.

"Here she is!" he exclaimed, excitedly. "This is ther place, an' I'll bet my life on it! Now ter find ther gold!"

"Don't be too sure about it, Kent," Wild answered, coolly. "Take it easy. Never get excited. It don't always pay, you know."

"I can't help it, Wild," was the reply. "'Cordin' ter what ther dyin' man said, this is ther very place he was tellin' me about. It's funny that I didn't strike it afore."

"Well, if it really is the place I reckon it's a good thing that you didn't find it before we met you. If you had Ike Bones and Jake Platt you'd have got the gold, while you would have been killed by them, most likely."

"Yes, that's right. But it wasn't ter be that way. It was ter be Young Wild West's Grub Stake what was ter make a fortune fur me. I believe that, Wild; I couldn't believe anything different."

"Well, I hope you're right. But take it easy. The three villains are up there somewhere. Don't get too excited. We'll take a look around and see what we can find."

All hands were deeply interested, so they began searching about among the rocks for some signs of a gold deposit.

But there was nothing to be found.

After a while Cheyenne Charlie unearthed a rusty tin cup, and as he dumped the dirt from it a nugget rolled out.

"Here yer are!" he exclaimed. "I reckon I've found somethin'. Here's a nugget that's worth fifty dollars, maybe."

"That's right, Charlie," said Wild, as he looked at the lump, and then weighed it in his hand. "It's gold, all right; but you have made a mistake in the value. That is about worth twenty dollars, I should say."

"Well, if there's a whole lot of 'em around here it will be all right," the scout answered. "Let's make a search."

They looked around, but could find nothing more.

However, our hero was satisfied that there must be more there, and he was just going to send Jim to help the Chinamen move the camping outfit there when he heard a loud yell from the direction the three villains were located in.

The attention of all hands was then turned that way, and a minute or so later, when more yells sounded, they wondered what was the matter.

Then, after what seemed quite an interval to them, an explosion occurred.

Wild knew that it was not a gun that did it; he had too good ears for that.

"That's one of Hop's firecrackers, I'll bet!" he exclaimed. "He's up there having fun with the sneaking coyotes, and I'll bet on it!"

"That's jest what's ther matter," the scout spoke up. "What in thunder made ther fool Chineese go there? He's always up ter some funny business, I reckon."

"I'll go over and investigate," said Wild, and he hastened toward the spot.

Then it was that he saw Hop coming down the rocks in a hurry.

But when he saw him he saw something else at the same time.

It was the disappearing form of a man near the top of the rocks.

Wild paid no further attention to Hop, but kept his eyes fixed upon the rocks.

The next moment he saw a hand appear with a revolver clutched in it.

He knew the weapon must be aimed to shoot Hop, so without any loss of time, he threw his rifle to his shoulder, and taking a quick aim, fired.

The result was quite satisfactory, for he heard the yell of pain and saw the revolver drop.

"I would have shot to kill if I could have seen any more of him," he muttered, as he hurried to meet the Chinaman. "What's the matter, Hop? How came you up there?"

"Me go uppee to see what um bad galoots tly do, so be," was the reply. "Whattree you shootee at?"

"Well, if I hadn't shot just when I did I reckon you would have got a bullet in your back. I reckon you're getting a little too careless about plying your tricks."

Hop grinned, and hurried along with the young dead-shot.

He did not attempt to make an explanation until they joined the others of the party, and then he related all that had transpired since the camp had been left in the charge of Wing and himself.

There was as much of interest to the recital as there was to laugh, though the latter got the best of it, for it was funny to hear the Celestial tell it in his own peculiar way.

"By ginger!" exclaimed the scout, when Hop had gone. "So that fat galoot did have nerve enough ter go an' hold up a couple of Chinamen, did he?"

"But I reckon he'll wish he had not done it when he finds that his money has disappeared," Jim put in.

"Yes, but it was nothin' but counterfeit money," Charlie retorted, a broad grin on his face.

"But Fat thought it real money, so he'll feel just as bad over it when he goes to look for it, and finds it gone, as though it was real money."

"That's so. Who would think of sich a thing ter play on folks. I'd like ter know? An' it takes a Chineese ter do, these funny things, too. I never could understand how one of ther pig-tailed galoots could be smart enough."

"Lat allee light, Misler Charlie," Hop spoke up. "Me allee samee velly smartee, and me no can helpee, so be."

"Yer don't need ter help it; let it go at that, you yeller galoot. But say! I would have been mighty tickled if I



could have been there when yer fooled them galoots with that rubber snake an' spider. My! No wonder we heard 'em yell!"

The scout laughed so heartily then that the villains must certainly have heard it.

But Wild did not care about this.

"Jim," said he, after they had talked the incident over, "I reckon you and Hop can go and fetch the outfit here. The three of you can manage it all right, I guess. This is not as good a place to camp, but it will do very well. We won't have to go so very far to get the water we need."

Jim nodded, and then Hop took him by the arm, as though he was a lady, and it was his duty to escort him, and away they went.

Another search of the surroundings was made before the camp had been shifted, but the result was the same.

The one nugget of gold Charlie had found seemed to be the only one around there—above ground, anyhow.

Kent Springer began to show signs of discouragement.

Wild looked at him and smiled.

"Never mind, Kent," said he. "If you are sure this is the place we'll start in and do some digging before the day is over. What did I grub stake you for? Surely not with the expectation that you was going to get discouraged so soon."

"Oh! I ain't discouraged," was the reply. "If you was ter go an' leave me here I'd stick till my grub give out. I'd dig up every foot of ther ground around here, blamed if I wouldn't!"

The tents were put up nearly in the centre of the space that lay between three hills.

Two hundred yards from the camp was the mouth of the gorge, and up on the ledge that could not be seen from there the three villains were located.

When noon came, and nothing in the way of a discovery had been made, Wild decided that it was about time that the villains were driven from the spot.

He knew it would hardly do to approach them boldly, for they would undoubtedly shoot at them from the cover of the rocks.

"Come, Charlie," said he. "I reckon we can attend to the galoots. We'll catch them, and then start them off in a hurry. To make them keep on going, we'll clip some of their hair off with bullets. I reckon that'll keep them from coming back."

"Yes, Wild; but yer know one of 'em is a murderer. He hadn't ought ter be let go."

"That's so. Well, we'll take him to Roaring Run, then. How will that suit you?"

"That's right. Come on."

The two started cautiously for the place where Hop had come down the rocks in such a hurry.

The Chinaman had told them that there was a way to get to the place where the villains were ensconced by going up to the top of the rocks, and they thought it better to go that way than to approach the ledge openly.

They clambered up without making a particle of noise, and when they at length reached the point where Hop had been concealed when he played his tricks on the men they paused and got their breath.

Wild peered over presently and much to his satisfaction he saw the three below on the ledge.

"Where are yer goin', Fat?" he heard the man named Ike say, as the big man made a move to leave the spot.

"Goin'?" he replied, as though surprised; "why, I'm goin' ter spy on them galoots down in ther holler. I want ter find out whether they've done anything toward gittin' that gold yet. You wait here, an' I'll soon let yer know."

Wild could tell by the way the man talked that he was not telling the truth.

"I'll bet he's going to quit them, Charlie," he whispered to the scout. "He'll go to the place where he hid the counterfeit money, and when he finds it is gone he'll be a surprised galoot, and no mistake!"

Fat now took his horse by the bridle.

"What are yer takin your nag fur?" Ike asked, suspiciously.

"Well, s'pose they see me, an' try ter git me, what then?" replied Fat.

"Well, yer ain't got fur ter run ter git here, if they do git after yer. Besides, a bullet will reach yer, horse or no horse."

"Well, I'm goin' ter take my horse. I want him ter git some of ther grass that's down there. He's hungry, an' so is yours. Better let me take 'em all down an' let 'em have a chance ter eat somethin'."

"That would be a good idea, I s'pose. Go ahead."

Fat took the three horses and led them from the ledge to the slope beyond.

As soon as he got where he knew he could not be seen by those he had left behind he turned two of the horses loose, keeping his own.

He went on to the niche he had put the big roll of money in, and with a broad grin on his evil face, he shook his fist in the direction of his pards, exclaiming in an undertone:

"Good-by, you fools! I ain't goin' ter stay around here ter be shot by no Young Wild West an' his pards. I'm goin' ter light out fur some other place, an' I'm goin' ter take more'n five thousand dollars with me, too! Good-by, Jud! Good-by, Ike!"

Then he removed the stone and thrust his hand in for the roll.

"Great snakes!" he cried. "Ther heathen must have follered me! He must have watched where I put ther money, an' now it's gone! I'm done fur; as sure as my name is Fat Robins!"

"That's right, you treacherous galoot!" exclaimed Wild, who had crept down upon the unsuspecting villain. "You're done for all right! Hold up your hands!"

The villain dropped to his knees when he saw the muzzle of the young deadshot's revolver staring him in the face.

Wild quickly disarmed him and tied his hands.

"Come on," he said, marching him the way he had come. "I want to tell your pards what sort of a galoot you are. You were going to sneak away and leave them. And you thought you had a pile of money to take with you. But your cake is all dough now, Fat. You've gone the limit, and you're at the jumping-off place!"

Straight back to the cave Wild went with his prisoner, and the next minnte he was facing the astounded men, who had been left behind by their pard.



## CHAPTER XV.

## CONCLUSION.

"Hold up your hands!"

As Wild uttered the command Charlie came sliding down from above.

There was nothing left for the two villains to do but to obey, for they did not have the courage to put up a fight, especially after seeing that Fat was a prisoner.

The scout soon disarmed them, and when their hands had been tied behind them their few belongings were tied to the back of Fat's horse, and then they set out for the camp.

Not until they got there did Wild tell what Fat had been up to.

His pards scowled fiercely at him when they heard of his treachery, and our hero knew that there would surely be trouble between them if they ever got the chance.

But he did not know what to do with them after he had got them.

"I reckon we had better start them for Roaring Run," he said. "We don't want to be bothered with them."

"Let me take 'em," spoke up Fat. "I'll guarantee that I'll go straight there with 'em, an' I'll turn 'em over to ther vigilance committee, too, providin' you folks will agree not to say anything ag'in me when yer git back. I never wanted ter go inter this game, anyhow. I did want ter git ther Chinees's money, though."

Our hero knew that the man could not be depended on, but he decided to let it go that way.

"Catch the other horses, Charlie," said Wild. "I'm going to do something I never did before. I am going to send a villain with two other villains, as prisoners, to shift for themselves. I reckon something will come out of it, for he won't dare to let them loose. He'll have to take them somewhere and have them locked up, or else leave them."

"I'll take 'em straight ter Roarin' Run," Fat spoke up. "That'll give me a chance ter redeem myself; an' I'll start life over ag'in. I mean what I say, Young Wild West."

"All right, then. I'll give you a chance. If I find that you land the prisoners there, and make the necessary charge against them, I'll see to it that you are let alone."

A few minutes later the trio was started off, Fat riding his horse and free, and the other two bound so they could not get loose without assistance.

Right here we may as well state that it was the last our friends ever saw of the three villains.

When they went back to Roaring Run a little later they found they had never reached there, so what came of them they did not know.

The following morning they all struck in to dig up the ground, for they were now almost as anxious to find the gold as the prospector was.

It was not until noon that anything like a discovery was made.

Then Arietta found an oil can that had been buried in a little hole near a big rock.

When she went to lift it she found she could hardly do so, and then she found that it was nearly full of gold dust.

The find was received with delight, and Springer made the welkin ring with his shouts of joy.

But the good luck was not to stop there.

The prospector found that there was some loose dirt near the big boulder and he began digging to get under it.

"I'll bet ther pile is under there," he said, excitedly. "Just git that rock over, boys, an' we'll soon see."

Wild made an examination of the ground and decided that there was reason to believe that such a thing might be.

He called for his partners to come there with crow-bars, and up came Charlie and Jim, followed by Hop.

"We want to turn this over, boys," our hero said. "Kent has got the idea in his head that there's gold under it."

They went right at it, and finding that they were not quite enough to do it, Wild helped them.

The united efforts of the four caused the big boulder to turn over.

"Gold! Gold!" cried the prospector, as he knelt and peered into an aperture that had been disclosed. "At last, Young Wild West! At last!"

The opening that had been hidden by the boulder was filled with golden nuggets.

Springer cried and laughed by turns.

"I knowed it would be all right," he said. "It was Young Wild West's Grub Stake what done ther business. If it hadn't been fur that I'd never have struck it rich! Hooray! I'm worth a fortune!"

"Well, if I am any judge about things, you certainly are," Wild answered, coolly, as he surveyed the pile of gold.

It is hardly necessary for us to go into any further details.

Suffice it to say that the gold panned out up to the expectations of all those interested.

In due time it was taken to the mining camp, and when it had finally been turned into money Kent Springer was worth a lot of money.

Of course he made them all a substantial present, and they could only accept it, for they knew he could well spare it, and that it came from the heart.

So this is the story of "Young Wild West's Grub Stake, and How It Made a Fortune."

## THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST'S DEATH DEFIANCE; or, ARIETTA AND THE DANITES," which will be the next number (330) of "Wild West Weekly."

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## SOME GOOD ARTICLES.

There are several trades which provide men and women with good livings simply because they enjoy an exceptionally keen sense of smell. Queen Alexandra's favorite perfume—violet—costs \$50 per ounce bottle, and it has to run the gantlet of five professional "smellers" before it is passed as being correctly blended and ready for her Majesty's use.

T. J. Goodwin, of Kansas City, Mo., solemnly declares that during the last twenty years he has filed 50,000 saws and walked 65,000 miles. While accomplishing this, he says, he has carried with him the burden of a saw-vise with a seat attachment, a contrivance which weighs 22 pounds. He is 69 years old. From the accounts he has kept, the old man estimates that he has filed an average of ten saws a day for the last twenty years, and has walked an average of about twelve miles a day for that period.

Recently a boy named Wilde, living in Chester, England, sent up a kite as a thunderstorm was approaching. Attached to the kite was a light wire in place of a string, and the boy wanted to know what would happen. He found out. When the storm broke he was hurled over a bush and left for dead, and it was a long day before he regained his senses. One of his arms was so paralyzed that he did not get the use of it back for two weeks. We often hear of a boy being as smart as chain lightning, but here is a case where one was not.

When an Indian paints his cheeks in scarlet lines and daubs a yellow square on his forehead, the world knows that he is in love. When he covers his face with zigzag black lines upon an ocher base, it is his purpose to—ah, I'm almost ashamed to say it—to get just as skated as he possibly can. When red circles are on each cheek-bone, and a rectangle of blue is on the forehead, the young brave is going out to steal a paleface's horse. When he paints white rings around his eyes, he is running for office; he is a candidate for medicine man or councilor, and the white rings signify that he ought to be elected because he has the wisdom of the owl.

Animals are said to weep from various causes. Grief at the loss of young ones and mates makes the dog, horse, elephant, rat, bear, deer, monkey, donkey, mule, cattle, camel and giraffe shed tears. Sobbing has been proved in the parrot, though this may be mimicry. The stag at bay, and the caged rat, have been seen to weep, while monkeys have wept when pitied, or from terror. The elephant has wept at the loss of its liberty,

and in some cases also from vexation. The dread of punishment has caused captive chimpanzees and other apes to weep. Joy, pain, fatigue, thirst, ill usage, sympathy, old age, approaching death, and pettishness, have all drawn tears from animals or at least driven them to a tearful state.

## GRINS AND CHUCKLES.

Parisienne—I spoke to him in English. He didn't understand. Parisian—No wonder; he's English.

"Is this section prosperous?" "You bet it is," answered the Kansas farmer. "I kin spread a net any time and snake a grand piano out of a cyclone."

In Cheyenne the other day a woman asked her husband if Bryan's daughter Grace wasn't a debutante. "I have never heard what church the Bryans belong to," he replied.

"John, do you love me?" "Yes." "Do you adore me?" "I s'pose." "Will you always love me?" "Ye—look here, woman! What have you ordered to be sent home now?"

"Now," said the warden to the forger, who had just arrived at the prison, "we'll set you to work. What can you do best?" "Well, if you'll give me a week's practice on your signature, I'll sign your official papers for you," said the prisoner.

The infant of the household was in its cradle. The head of the house was at home, peevish and fault-finding. At length he became unendurable. "You've done nothing but make mistakes to-night," he growled. "Yes," she answered meekly, "I began by putting the wrong baby to bed."

A central Kansas paper revives the story about a traveling man who went into a Kansas hotel for dinner. The waitress came to him and said, "Bean soup?" "No, thank you," said the traveling man, "I don't care for any bean soup." "Dinner is over, then," responded the waitress.

At a dinner given by the prime minister of a little kingdom on the Balkan Peninsula, a distinguished diplomat complained to his host that the minister of justice, who had been sitting on his left, had stolen his watch. "Ah! he shouldn't have done that," said the prime minister in tones of annoyance. "I will get it back for you." Sure enough, toward the end of the evening the watch was returned to its owner. "And what did he say?" asked the diplomat. "Sh-h!" cautioned the host, glancing anxiously about him. "He doesn't know that I have got it back."

"I thoroughly disapprove of stories about drunken men," observed a prominent New York society woman the other day. "But there is one that I think is really amusing. A man slightly the worse off for that which inebriates, but does not always cheer, was on his way home when he collided with a box picket fence which had been placed around a tree to protect it. Being somewhat unsteady on his limbs, the man grasped hold of what he supposed was a picket fence, and started to feel his way along it. After rotating around the tree for about half an hour he appeared somewhat puzzled at the extraordinary length of the fence, but he kept bravely on for some time. Finally, however, his courage failed him, and he sank down at the foot of the box fence with a groan of despair. "'Fenced in!' he moaned."



## VICTORIA, THE REFUGEE

By ALEX. ARMSTRONG.

A glorious autumn sun was flooding its golden light over the towering mountains, fertile valleys, and extensive plains of grand old Mexico. No country, in point of grandeur of scenery, can surpass the land of the Mexican, if we except towering peaks of Switzerland. There is beauty there untouched by artists' pencil or painters' brush, and will so remain for a thousand years to come.

No mountain roe was more lithe than Alina Cassino, the only child of a hardy mountaineer. Alina's father, in one of the many struggles which had rent his government, had been on the unfortunate side, and was compelled to flee to the mountains to save his life.

Senorita Alina had all her life known only the mountain wilds. She knew but little of the internal commotions that distracted her lovely country. Her heart was gentle, true and loving.

Her mother, dying when she was but an infant, she had only her father, their small flock, and Bollitto, their great dog, on which to bestow her affections. Accustomed to the mountains from her childhood, it was but natural that Alina should be found wandering on the mountain side, among the groves of chaparral, her only companion Bollitto, and a small carbine, which her father had given her and learned her how to use.

Not unfrequently had they been forced to defend their little mountain home from bands of Indians and outlaws. These struggles of her childhood had been severe. Almost from her infancy she had been accustomed to scenes of blood.

Her father regarded as a mountain outlaw, and not daring to claim the protection of his government from the mountain robbers and Indians, was forced to be his own protector.

Alina had chased the fawn all the forenoon, almost as fleet as the wild animal, and had paused, leaning on a large boulder of stone; her elbows rested on the stone, supporting her cheek and her long black hair in wavy masses, falling about her well-shaped shoulders of snowy whiteness.

Her eyes, dark and sparkling, wandered down to the bluffs and rocks, thousands of feet below; her dress was of the peculiar homespun goods of the mountaineer, and the tanned deerskins fringed and ornamented something after the Indian style. The skirt of her maroon-colored dress came only below her knees, and displayed elegantly shaped limbs encased in leggings of tanned deerskin ornamented with fringes and beads. On her feet instead of the Indian moccasins were the small but stout shoes worn by the Mexican mountaineer.

There was no mixed blood in the veins of Alina. She was as pure a Castilian as anybody of nobility in old Spain.

Suddenly, loud wild shouts arose from the chaparral and flags that covered the broken portions of the mountain side not many hundred feet below her. Following the shouts came rapid musket and pistol shots.

Gazing in the direction from which they came, she espied three men bounding up the side of the mountain, leaping from rock to rock, from cliff to cliff, with prodigious strides, while after them came a dozen soldiers of the cruel Iturbide, the then emperor of Mexico.

As one of the fugitives sprang upon a boulder of stone, scarcely gaining a foothold, one of the pursuers leveled his musket at him; a white puff of smoke ascended from the muzzle, and the fleeing man, throwing his carbine in the air, fell back fully twenty feet below, where he had been struck.

One of the remaining turned, leveled his carbine, and fired. Alina saw the soldier fall, then the rapid popping of guns,

and white puffs of smoke from the muskets of the other soldiers, indicating that the pursuers had given the bold fugitives a volley. The girl could even see the bullets striking off bits of stone, near the brave mountaineer, for such his dress and manner indicated him to be.

Only a moment did he pause, then bounded away to the side of his companion, who seemed wounded, and was moving more slow every moment.

The mountaineer aided his wounded companion, and reloaded his carbine the best he could. They had not gone fifty paces along the path which wound around the mountain far below where the now thoroughly aroused, but not frightened Alina stood.

Here they paused and again fired. Two of the soldiers fell, but the others pressed on with yells of vengeance, discharging their guns as fast as they could load them.

The wounded man was struck by another bullet and fell dead at the taller fugitive's feet. The man having nothing to impede his flight, hurried on around the spur of the mountain, and was soon lost to sight.

The soldiers of the cruel Iturbide crowded on until she saw that not a dozen, but at least a hundred were after the mountaineer.

Alina's whole heart went out in sympathy for the fleeing man. She had been taught from childhood to despise the soldiers of the haughty Iturbide, and naturally her heart would go out toward the mountaineer. He was not only one of the lowly class to which he belonged, who were compelled at times to burrow in the ground like rabbits to escape the cruel soldiers, but now fleeing for his life.

Seizing her carbine, and bidding Bollitto keep at her side, she started in the direction of the small mountain hacienda, taking care that the sharp ridges of stone and bunches of chaparral should conceal her from the view of the enemy.

"They will surely kill father if they find him, she said, as she bounded along the difficult path with the speed of a mountain roe. The path was not only difficult but dangerous. A single false step would send her to eternity.

Occasionally there came to her ears the crack of musketry, and she feared in her heart that the third fugitive had fallen by his prosecutors.

"He was so grand, so noble, and so brave," the poor girl sobbed; "it was awful that he should die. The dogs would not spare even a brave man."

The path was very winding and difficult for even Alina's experienced head and practical feet. As she was winding around the crest of a spur of the mountain, and just emerged on the plateau, the tall, dark-mustached fugitive sprang upon the table-land at the same moment.

So hard pressed was he that he had dropped his carbine and sword, though he ran with a pistol in each hand.

Scarcely had he emerged from the rocks and chaparral on one side, than a Mexican officer with two soldiers leaped from a clump of dwarfed oaks, and sprang upon him.

The brave mountaineer was not to be overcome without a struggle, and, leveling his pistol, shot one of the soldiers dead. The other fired his piece at the tall stranger, and Alina saw his left arm fall helpless at his side. In an instant, the two remaining men threw themselves on the almost exhausted and wounded fugitive, and bore him to the earth.

All the sympathies of the maiden were with the poor wounded mountaineer, and, leveling her carbine, she shot the soldier through the head. The officer looking around to see from whence the shot came, the stranger sprang to his feet, and with one well-directed blow felled him to the earth. Snatching the sword from the hand of the officer he pinned him to the ground.



Then the tall mountaineer, clasping his wounded wrist with his right hand, looked about to see who his preserver was.

His astonishment can be better imagined than described when he discovered only a beautiful girl, holding in her hand a very light carbine.

Removing his sombrero from his head, and bowing politely, he said:

"Senorita, is it possible that to you I owe my life?"

"I surely have rendered you some aid, senor, but your life is not safe yet. The mountains are full of your enemies. They are behind every boulder in every chaparral, and their guns are aimed at your heart."

"With so brave a defender I might almost brave the entire army of the usurper Iturbide."

"You must be secreted for a few days until the soldiers leave the mountains."

"Where?"

"Follow me, be silent, and I will guide you to a place of safety."

The beautiful girl then took the lead at a swift run down the tortuous mountain path, followed by the wounded Spaniard. All along the mountain could be heard the shouts of the bloodthirsty pursuers, and the girl was frequently compelled to turn aside to allow them to pass. Her keen sense of hearing and sight were a world of advantage to her. The route was a very difficult one, attended with danger at every step. No head but the steady mountaineer could have followed at her rate of speed.

They at length descended the mountain, crossed a very narrow valley, and ascended about midway up another. Here they found a plateau of several acres where was the hacienda of Senor Cassino, the exile.

"Father," said the girl, pausing at the door, "the enemy are among the mountains. Here is a stranger whose life they seek."

The fugitive now saw a hardy man about forty-five years of age. It was Cassino, the political exile and outlaw. In an instant he had buckled a sword about his waist, and thrust a pair of pistols in his belt. He took a rifle from the rack, and said:

"Senor, I see you are not only nearly exhausted, but wounded. We will dress your wound when we have time, for the present we must find some place of security."

Instead of leaving the small hacienda, he opened a trap door that led down into the earth. The girl and wounded mountaineer followed. The trap door, which was a broad, thin slab of stone, closed down on them, and the two proceeded along a long corridor, which was lighted up by a torch carried by Cassino. They finally came to an apartment in the cave that was fitted up as an elegant room. This was the underground hiding place for the exile and his daughter.

Here they remained for three days, no one daring to leave the cavern except Alina.

She finally reported the coast clear, and the stranger came forth and bid the kind mountaineer adieu. His arm was not healed, but doing very well, and he said he must go. Taking the hand of the beautiful Anita, and gazing in those soft, dark eyes, he said:

"My dear girl, you have saved my life; was it worth anything it should be given to you. Some day it may. I have now one request to make."

"What is it, senor?" asked Alina, timidly.

"That is, that you give me the most sacred piece of jewelry you possess."

The most sacred piece of jewelry Alina possessed was a golden medal that had been the property of her mother. Her name had been engraved on it. After a few moments' hesi-

tation she brought the medal from the chest where it was kept, and gave it to the tall stranger, who replied:

"When I send for you, and the messenger brings this medal, accompany him."

\* \* \* \* \*

Two years had passed. Brighter days had come to our beloved Mexico. Iturbide, the tyrant, had been hurled from his self-constituted throne, and the three great generals and patriots, Victoria, Bravo and Negrete, had taken possession of the government. Victoria, who had been for years an exile and a refugee, was elected President of the United States of Mexico. The nation was at peace, and our happy land was far more prosperous than it had ever been before or since.

A messenger came to the mountain hacienda of Cassino for Senorita Cassino, bringing the medal. The President, Victoria, desired to see her at the capital. She, accompanied by her father, went. Entering the palatial residence of the president, she was told his excellency would see her in a few moments.

The door of the apartment opened, and the tall, handsome stranger, whose life she had saved, entered. With a cry she sprang into his arms, and was almost smothered with kisses.

After the excitement had subsided, Alina asked for President Victoria, who had sent for her.

"Behold him," said the stranger; "I, the man who sent for you, my mountain darling, to be my wife, I am President Victoria."

The wedding was celebrated with great splendor, and Mexico yet points with pride to the successful reign of Victoria, the refugee, and his beautiful little mountain bride.

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